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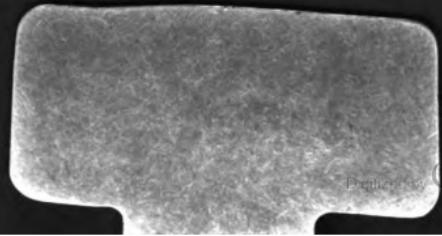
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A saint among saints, a sketch of the life of saint Emmelia, ...

Mary Stanislaus
MacCarthy



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A SAINT AMONG SAINTS.

A

SAINT AMONG SAINTS

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF

SAINT EMMELIA

MOTHER OF ST. BASIL THE GREAT

BY

S. M. S.

Second Edition.

DUBLIN

M. H. GILL AND SON
50 UPPER SACKVILLE STREET

1885

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Imprimatur:

**✠ EDUARDUS CARDINALIS MAC CABE,
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TO
SAINT EMMELIA
THIS LITTLE BOOK
IS DEDICATED
BY
ONE OF HER CLIENTS
WITH THE HOPE THAT IT MAY
IN SOME SMALL DEGREE
PROMOTE DEVOTION TO HER
AND
TO HER SAINTLY FAMILY.

MAY, 1882.

Advertisement to Second Edition.

A LARGE edition of this work has been received so favourably by the public that a new issue has been for some time required.

Though this success has rather distressed than gratified the religious modesty of the Author, she will forgive it when it is linked with a memory which Ireland will always cherish affectionately. Such a link is formed by the circumstance alluded to by our other illustrious poet, Aubrey de Vere, in the note prefixed to his beautiful sonnets on the next leaf.

What Denis Florence Mac Carthy did for the fame of St. Brendan in verse, his Dominican daughter has done in graceful prose for St. Emmelia.

M. R.

THE following sonnets were written on the perusal of the Life of St. Emmelia (the illustrious mother of four canonised Saints, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory Nyssen, St. Peter, and St. Macrina) recently published by the daughter of my old and valued friend, Denis Florence Mac Carthy.

AUBREY DE VERE.

Curragh Chase, May 11th, 1883.

SAINT EMMELIA.

I.

Her Monasteries on the Iris in Pontus.

Not for thy snowy peaks, thy woods that wave
Where rolls thine Iris on in swift career ;
Not for thy mountain floods that downward rave,
Thy river-breadths shattered o'er ledges sheer ;
Not for the gems thy myriad streams that pave ;
Not for roe-haunted glade or shadowed mere ;
Not for green lawn, blue gorge, or ivied cave ;
'Tis not for these that Christians hold thee dear,
Thou Pontic Paradise ! In Pagan days
Beauty was thrall to Pleasure or to Pride :—
Earth's beauty here Emmelia sanctified,
Teaching wild wastes to sing their Maker's praise ;
Here first *her* Basil taught his Rule austere ;
Asia's monastic life was rooted here.

II.

THE TWO SANCTITIES :

Her domestic life by the Halys in Cappadocia.

The Halys to the Iris whispers low :
“ Thy Saint—Emmelia—came to me a Bride ;
Her Lord and she, at morn and eventide,
Knelt on my banks, or strayed with footsteps slow :
Amid my flowers I saw her flowers up-grow—
Her babes—I bathed them in my crystal tide,
I that through flowery meads delight to glide,
Though born, like thee, among the thrones of snow.”
Then Iris answers : “ Yea, and Saint not less
Was my Emmelia when she walked with thee
Than cloistered in my mountains. Saintliness,
Ascending, mounts by order and degree ;
From thee and me alike our Saint is passed :—
In thee the flower, in me the star was glassed.

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A Saint among Saints.

A Saint among Saints.

"The lives of the Saints are a world of their own. *There* the axioms of the Sacred Heart are the standards of all deeds ; and *there* is a fragrance of Paradise, though we see not its flowers, and a spirit in the air, which is health to the soul for it is fresh from the heights of Sion."—FATHER FABER.

SPRING ! It is not much of a word, this little homely knot of five commonplace consonants, and one insignificant vowel ; yet, talk of instantaneous photography ! this monosyllable sets before us, like a flash of lightning, a picture more truthful in outline than any ever sent forth from his camera by that master artist, the Sun, and glowing, moreover, with all that rich natural colouring which this art, in its present

stage, has no means of reproducing. The picture, too, though purely mental, appeals to the other senses as well as to the sight. There distinctly before us is the pale, delicate verdure of the trees and hedgerows, the fresh brightness of the grass, the sparkle of the merry little stream, tripping along over the shining pebbles; while in our ears is the first joyous song of "nature's choristers," half surprise, half ecstasy, as if they never could get over the delightful wonder of finding themselves alive, nor grow weary of the thrills of delicious melody in which they pour forth their gratitude to their Creator for the gift of being. And the breeze—here it comes fragrant of hawthorn and apple-trees, or strewing upon our path the blossoms of the prodigal laburnum, or the early lilac—what though it be somewhat wild and boisterous, addicted to pranks and gambols that would seem incredible to the languid summer zephyrs, or to the dignity of those melancholy winds that rustle through the mellow autumn leaves—no matter, it is rousing, cheering, in-

vigorating. Down come the light showers, at a moment's warning; but how glorious are the gleams of returning sunshine on the fresh, dripping foliage, every leaf and blade of grass alight with precious diamond tears! Luxuriant June roses and other gorgeous summer flowers will claim our admiration in due season; but can they ever receive the welcome with which we hail the first fragile snowdrops, the gold and purple crocuses, or even our old childish friends, the buttercups and cowslips of spring?

You see we have wandered from our picture into the actual spring; but it only shows how faithful the portraiture in our mind is. Is there any season like it? Spring, youth, morning: they have ever been grouped together. Through all of them, beneath their own many beauties and special joys, there runs, sometimes unsuspected, a throbbing under-current, which is, after all, the hidden source of half their brightness—the happiness of expectation. Johnson said long ago, “ We love to expect, and when expectation is disappointed or gratified,

we want to be again expecting." Ah, is it not that this world was made for expectancy, not for fruition? The longest life here is, after all, only the brief spring-tide which precedes the summer of eternity. God makes our earthly spring, in many ways, bright and happy. He sprinkles fresh blossoms in our path, and cheers us on with the sunshine of his grace; but we must not be surprised if harsh winds and showers succeed. Nothing is finished, nothing is completed, nothing is brought to its perfection here. "*Expectans, expectavi*" is our cry from youth to age, and this is one of the reasons why those seasons in time and nature, which correspond most fully to this sentiment of our hearts, possess such unfailing attractions for us.

Perhaps this natural predilection has something to do with the charm which the holy men and women of the early Church have for most of us. Without the least disparagement of those dear saints, whose lot has been cast nearer to our own times, in this vesper hour of the world's history,

may we not venture to say, that the effects of progress have been felt even in the domain of spirituality? Though the essence must ever be the same, sanctity, somehow, seems in its exterior aspect to have become, in course of years, a much more complicated and abstruse affair; and there will always be some who will turn with relief from the contemplation of the delicate elaborations of modern saintliness to fix their gaze on the few broad simple lines in which the portraits of our great progenitors in the faith have been sketched by the hands of their immediate disciples.

The early Martyrs, the Fathers of the Desert, the Doctors of the Church; what lives were theirs! So calm, though spent in troubrous times; so "roomy," though so full of work; so free from haste, excitement, fuss. *They* truly lived whole days and full months, not as we do, flinging aside the present "as the rind of some sweet future:" and what a monument have they left behind them! Again, these great intellectual giants, who built up, stone by stone, the wondrous fabric of the

Church's theology, were possessed of a simplicity, a *naturalness* equal to their greatness. They let us see straight down into their hearts. St. John Chrysostom, craving for "more letters, and *long* ones, mind," from his absent friends; the tender, mutual affection uniting Basil and Gregory; the passionate outcry of St. Augustine at the death-bed of "his Nebridius," or the tears which he shed over the grave of his mother, St. Monica; these, and a thousand other such "touches of nature," make us cherish these austere recluses and cenobites as dear personal friends. Even "their lingering imperfections surely make us love them more, without leading us to reverence them less, and act as a relief to the discouragement and despondency which may come over those who, in the midst of much error and sin, are striving to imitate them."—(*Cardinal Newman.*) Not that similar things could not be told of every saint in the calendar;—the supernatural never wholly exorcises the natural; but, as a matter of fact, they are *not* told of all. "The early saints," as Cardinal

Newman elsewhere remarks, “ have written auto-biography on a large scale ; they have given us their own histories, their thoughts, words, and actions ; they have left us that kind of literature which more than any other represents the abundance of the heart, which more than any other approaches to conversation—I mean correspondence. It gives us what no memorials can reach, however skilfully elaborate, however free from effort or study, however conscientiously faithful, however guaranteed by the veracity of the writers. Why cannot art rival the lily or the rose ? Because the colours of the flowers are developed and blended by the forces of an inward life ; while, on the other hand, the lights and shades of the painter are diligently laid on from without.”

And here, at the outset, a difficulty presents itself. A very modest little spring violet, indeed, is she with whom we are specially concerned just now. Hidden deep down in the green leaves of humility and retirement, her existence betrayed only by the sweet perfume of her virtues, and the

beneficent influence she exercised, she never wrote a line, or, at least as far as we can learn, no words of hers have been preserved. Her life was lived in the lives of others. To attempt a sketch of it is to endeavour to trace the tiny silver thread through the mazes of the rich fabric, of which, however, it is the foundation and the uniting bond. From her sons' writings we learn most that we know of Emmelia, but their deeds are her true eulogium. Parents live again in their children ; the mother's influence especially is all pervading, and ever distinguishable. Well, here is

“Another item for the common story,
How large a mother's part in hero's glory.”

Here is the mother not of one saint but of a family of saints. Would it not suffice, then, to look at St. Emmelia in the mirror of her children, and to behold her there to the best advantage ? We shall do so, indeed ; but there are clients of hers who would, besides, fain persuade her to show them some glimpses of herself, who desire to form some idea

of her own personality. For them the facts recorded of their patroness have been collected together. They form an outline which we have striven to fill up for ourselves. It is a pity that imagination should be called into play at all. The present attempt, we are well aware, is open to objections from first to last ; nevertheless, it is an effort of love, and true love can never be wanting in reverence. The members of this saintly family, with St. Emmelia as the central figure, have long exercised a fascination over us. We love to dwell among them, to picture their home-life, to share their joys and sorrows. We seem to know them all individually. We cannot, indeed, say much that is new about them ; but they are “living light-fountains, which it is good and pleasant to be near.” Profitably, then, may we now spend a little time in their company, reviving the memory of what we have heard or read of them, and breathing for a space the pure and invigorating atmosphere of that sweet spring-tide of the Church.

I.

EMMELIA.

HE time was midway in the third decade of the fourth century ; the season, early autumn ; the place, a wild region in Pontus. A beautiful young girl stood by a low wall, gazing sadly over the gloomy surface of the Euxine Sea. Around her on either side stretched the dark forests, whose impenetrable masses of shade, mirrored in the waves beneath, gave the water that appearance of inky blackness in which the modern name originated. “The Euxine ! that strange, mysterious sea, which typifies the abyss of outer darkness as the blue Mediterranean basks under the smile of heaven in the centre of civilisation and religion.” Pontus was the Siberia of those times. There during the last period of the

Persecutions the faithful Christians were banished, or thither were they forced to fly, in order to avoid worse consequences. St. Gregory Nazianzen assures us that so violent were the measures employed by the Emperor Maximinus against the Christians of Cappadocia, at the close of Diocletian's persecution, that compared with their sufferings at this time, all that the faithful had undergone from other emperors seemed light. And he adds, that many illustrious confessors of the faith, though disposed to suffer everything for Jesus Christ in grateful remembrance of all He had endured for their love, nevertheless judged it expedient to preserve their lives and property by voluntary exile, whenever this was practicable, following herein the rules of prudence which our Lord Himself prescribed. These rules may be briefly summed up thus:— That none should expose themselves rashly to martyrdom, and this out of consideration for their persecutors and for the weak among their brethren, to avoid giving the former an occasion for multiplying their crimes, and to warn the latter against

exposing themselves heedlessly to temptations beyond their strength ; but that, on the other hand, if called upon to render testimony to the truth, they should not shrink from the trial, for which grace would then be given. By the observance of these two rules they avoided, on the one side, rashness and presumption, and on the other timidity and sloth.

Emmelia was a martyr's daughter. Her father's family was one of the richest and noblest in Cappadocia. Its members had filled the most conspicuous civil and military posts in the city of Cæsarea, and, to quote St. Gregory again, what was far better than these empty distinctions, which are prized only by the vain and foolish—whose hearts are tied down to the earth, and who are unable to raise their thoughts above its transitory interests,—they were a family in which sanctity would seem to have been hereditary, transmitted as a precious heirloom from generation to generation. Fitting, therefore, was it that all their honours should be crowned and consecrated by the glorious seal of

persecution for justice' sake. Emmelia, as we have said, was a martyr's daughter. Her father gave his life for his faith under the Emperor Licinius, and her gentle, broken-hearted mother, taking refuge in Pontus, with her only child, pined away in this strange, barbarous country, and soon followed her saintly husband to the grave.

And now, as Emmelia stands there, looking down on the dark, comfortless waves, no wonder that the young face should be so unnaturally pensive and the beautiful eyes so full of unshed tears. She was alone, quite alone in an unfriendly world. The fond hearts whose only joy she had been were cold in death. Sister, brother, near relative she had none, and she was far from her native city, where friends might have been found to protect and love her. True, she was young, rich, and beautiful ; but these gifts, which in ordinary cases are powerless to afford comfort in a moment of sorrow like hers, were, moreover, in this instant, destined to add another trial, the bitterest of all, to her already overflowing cup of affliction. Let

us listen to her as her sad thoughts now find vent in prayer.

"Oh, my dear father and mother," she cried, "come back, oh, come back to me, or take me where you are! Can you look down and see the misery of your Emmelia, and still be happy even in heaven? O father! I want your protection; O mother! I want your love, your comfort, your guidance! See how I stretch out my hands to you, I whose happiness and welfare was your sole earthly desire, and you are for the first time cold and heedless. Can death make such a change? No sign, no sound but the dreary echo of my own words! O my God, the Father of the fatherless, Thou who hast taken away from me my dear parents, hast Thou also abandoned me? Thou knowest that my only wish from earliest childhood has ever been to consecrate myself to Thee for ever. And now! Oh! what shall I do? Wilt Thou not even send me one ray of light, beset as I am by snares, without a friend?"

She paused, and as she cast down her eyes, which

had been raised to heaven in the fervour of her supplication, her glance fell upon the roof of a dwelling-house, situated in a woody hollow at no great distance. “Ah! my God, I thank Thee!” she exclaimed; “my prayer has been already granted. Ungrateful that I am! I said I had no friend; had I then forgotten the saintly Macrina, my dear mother’s solace in many a trouble? She will speak words of counsel and consolation to me also. I will open my heart to her. I will tell her everything, and be guided by her experience. They say she is severe and grave; but I have ever found her kind, and my mother loved her. Besides, it is God who has put it in my mind to seek her, and He will surely move her to some little pity for me. Yes, I will go to Macrina at once, before my courage fails me.”

“Basil, too, is he not a friend?” she thought, as, calling one of her female attendants to accompany her, she took the forest path to Macrina’s house. “How different he is from all the others! I feel that if I had a brother he would be something

like Basil, only I fancy I should not be quite so much in awe of him. How is it, that although he has never said a severe word to me, scarcely even given me a severe look, I should experience, I scarce know what, in his presence, a something which obliges me to be always at my best? Though he is ever reserved, unobtrusive, silent, there is that in his very presence which puts to flight all littleness, carelessness, frivolity. His own nature is so earnest, deep, and true. Others feel this, too, but as a restraint; I feel it as a delight. Ah, my God! is it not that he is Thy faithful servant, that when he does speak Thy name is ever the key-note of those glowing, eloquent words of his? Is not this the secret of his influence? And if Thy very service can impart such attractions and inspire such reverence, what must Thou be thyself, O Thou only love of my soul, to whom I desire to belong for ever?"



II.

MOTHER AND SON.

BASIL and his mother Macrina dwelt alone together. Macrina had had other children, but they were scattered now, some dead, some established in homes of their own. Basil alone remained with his widowed mother. Son and mother were strikingly alike. Both faces wore that look of sorrow which is not unhappiness, but which tells of a past, now hidden from sight, perhaps, but never forgotten. There was a certain austerity too, which inspired respect and repelled familiarity, and yet there was a sweetness somewhere—perhaps more visible in the aged face;—was it in the lines about the mouth, or in those calm, gray eyes that seldom met yours? Both had that rare smile which sets your heart beating and your blood tingling,

which says *all* in approval or encouragement, and which those once fortunate enough to gain it hold ever after as a priceless reward, worthy of any exertion.

As we look in upon them now, the mother—tall and so erect that we decide at once the snowy whiteness of her hair is due to anxiety and suffering rather than to age,—standing by her son's seat, her hand upon his shoulder, looking down into his face, while he,—tossing aside the books in which he had been engrossed a moment before,—meets her gaze with a smile full of tenderness and confidence, all the severity has gone, and we see how complete is the identity of heart and mind which exists between them. All natural affection, purified and elevated, is there, and there is something more, which may be felt but not described,—the love of saint for saint.

Macrina was born in Neo-Cæsarea, in Pontus, about the year 265. It is said that in her childhood she had listened to the sermons of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus: at all events, she was

instructed in the Christian religion by the immediate disciples of that saint. Carefully did she treasure in her heart and transmit to her children and grandchildren all that she had heard or learned of his teachings; in particular we are told that she was ever remarkable for her strict conformity with the usages established by him, even when they were opposed to the ancient customs of her country. This instance is sufficient to prove the early developed strength of her character and her freedom from human respect.

She was married in Cappadocia to a husband in every way worthy of her, and they spent many happy years together there in the tranquil exercise of every Christian virtue. The persecution begun by Diocletian, and continued with still greater fury by Maximin and Licinius, was to afford this holy couple an occasion for sanctifying themselves still more. We have already spoken of the reason which induced many of the faithful to submit to voluntary exile. Macrina and her husband were among the fugitives. First in the

depths of the forest, and then amid the dreary mountains of Pontus, they led a life of the greatest hardship and privation, exposed to all the inclemency of the seasons, to cold and heat, sun and rain, deprived of all human society. These privations were the more trying to them as they were both of noble birth and had been accustomed from infancy to every comfort and convenience.

Seven years they dwelt in these desert regions, but their trials were not without consolation. More than once in the midst of their sufferings did they experience in a remarkable manner the effects of the Divine Bounty. On one occasion, for instance, St. Gregory Nazianzen relates that, being reduced by absolute want to the last extremity of weakness and exhaustion, they had recourse in prayer to that God who for forty years miraculously supported the Hebrew people in the desert, and their prayer was no sooner ended than God sent towards them a herd of deer, which allowed themselves to be captured without

difficulty, and supplied them with food for a considerable time. The pious family beheld in this event the provident and beneficent hand of their Heavenly Father; they returned Him humble thanks; and, regarding this miracle as a pledge of the everlasting rewards which they hoped to obtain hereafter from His infinite mercy, they encouraged one another to support with still greater fortitude all the sufferings they had yet to endure for his holy cause. With most of them, indeed, the testimony which they were called on to render to Jesus Christ ended only with their lives. Besides the hardships here related, and many others, which it would be tedious to recount, they had to suffer the confiscation of all their worldly goods.

After her husband's death, Macrina retired to the humble dwelling in which we now find her on the shores of the dreaded Euxine, and here she had resided for many years with her son Basil. Her name was celebrated far and near as an illustrious confessor of the faith. Her sanctity was acknowledged on all hands. She was an exact

copy of the valiant woman “who looked well to the ways of her house and ate not her bread idly.” Nothing could be more touching than the reverence and love displayed by Basil towards her, unless it were her fond pride in him. And he was a son to be proud of. Besides his virtues and fervent piety he was gifted with remarkable talents, which he had improved to the utmost by study. There was no science to which he had not applied himself with signal success. In particular, he was endowed with an eloquence which had already gained for him the highest consideration in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen who prognosticated for him the most glorious triumphs in the career of oratory. In person he was tall, of active and athletic frame. He had proved, on various occasions, that if it had pleased him to take part with the young men, his neighbours, in their sports and trials of strength and skill, he might have made himself as conspicuous in these pastimes as he was in the school or the assembly-hall. But he cared not for such amusements :

indeed he had hitherto shunned ordinary society, except in so far as charity required, and devoted his leisure hours exclusively to his mother.

"My son," Macrina was saying to him now, "I understand and appreciate your delicacy of feeling, but methinks you carry it too far. Emmelia may be your superior in fortune at this moment; but, you know, the civil tribunals have decreed that the property which your father and myself lost through our adherence to our holy religion should be restored to our descendants. It is only a matter of time. Sooner or later you will possess estates in Pontus and Cappadocia equal at least in value to those of Emmelia. You know well, Basil, how I have prayed and hoped that, before my death, I might see you united to a wife worthy of you; and now that you have at last fixed your affections on one in whom even my exacting eyes can discover no flaw, it passes my comprehension how you can be withheld from gratifying my ardent wishes by such trivial considerations."

"Mother," replied Basil, smiling, "your affec-

tion leads you, in the first place, to overlook the fact that there are *two* parties to a marriage contract. I have never said a word to Emmelia which would lead her to guess my feelings in her regard, nor can I form the faintest conjecture as to how she is affected towards me. Nay, look not so incredulous; all do not behold me with your partial eyes. You will answer that in any case the way out of this difficulty is easy. True; but it is not open to me. I see I must needs tell you the real cause of my hesitation. You know I never had a secret from you, dearest mother; this secret is not mine, but Emmelia's; however, it must soon become known now, and it is safe meanwhile with you. Some time since I discovered, no matter how, that Emmelia's affections are fixed above this world, that her ardent desire is to consecrate herself to God in the holy state of virginity. I need not conceal from you, my own mother, that the discovery gave me a bitter pang—for, oh, how I love her! I know it would surprise her not a little could she learn, when I sat there often silent

and serious in her hospitable house, how my heart would beat fast at the sound of her gentle voice, how my eyes would follow her as she ministered to her sick mother or attended to the wants of her guests, how not a word, not a gesture of hers escaped me. And since her mother's death—though I have not ventured to intrude upon her sorrow—how my thoughts have been with her daily, hourly,—poor innocent little dove, so lone, so unprotected! I know that dangers menace her, I know that there are devouring wolves about, but I cannot believe that they will ever really injure her. Should she ever require my assistance as a friend and a brother, it is hers; but I think you understand now, mother, how it is that I cannot claim the *right* to protect her. But do not be uneasy about me. I have prayed for strength; I have placed the matter in God's hands; I am again at peace. Should He will the accomplishment of my desire, I have asked Him to bring it about in His own way and time, and in such a manner that His will may be clearly manifest.

Should He call her to His own immediate service, I trust He will give me grace to bow my head in submission. Surely He has a right to all that is best, and brightest, and fairest in this world; and I own when I think of Emmelia's angelic modesty, her filial piety, her innocence, her thousand perfections, I experience not a foreboding—for that would imply want of resignation—but a conviction that God cannot destine her for any less lofty calling. But have I not already kept you too long from your cherished household avocations? You must not be in such haste to get your place filled by another," he added, his rare and beautiful smile lighting up his eyes like warm sunshine, as he bent his stately head and kissed the aged hand that still rested on his arm; "you and I have been sufficient for one another these many years; why should it not be so to the end?"

"Ah," thought Macrina, as she quitted the apartment, "he speaks thus cheerfully, with his usual tender thoughtfulness, trying to deceive me; but a mother's heart cannot be deceived. Well

do I see all he has suffered, and is suffering. However, he has placed his fate in the hands of God ; where could it be better?—and I also, although it is more difficult to be resigned to the trials of those we love than to our own, I also will follow his example, and commit his future with all confidence, to the guidance of Divine Providence.”

“The lady Emmelia is without, asking if you will admit her,” announced Nonna, the trusted domestic who had clung to the family throughout all their vicissitudes of fortune, and who now discharged the more laborious duties in the simple little household. And in another moment Emmelia was at Macrina’s feet, pouring out into her sympathetic heart the burden of her perplexities and sorrows.

“My poor child, my poor Emmelia,” said Macrina, at last, “I fear it is but too true. We Christians are still under a ban. We are despised, distrusted, even though for the moment active persecution is suspended. An appeal to the civil

powers for protection against these lawless men in such an undertaking as yours would, I fear, be quite useless in these wild times, and this barbarous country. The authorities would be far more likely to side with the ruffians. But how, think you, did your secret transpire?"

"I know not," answered Emmelia. "You are aware that I have spent the month, which has elapsed since my darling mother left me, in complete seclusion. Even my persecutors respected my grief, and allowed me to remain unmolested. I had not yet taken any steps with regard to arrangements for my future. I could hardly think calmly yet, or form any plans, when, as I told you, last evening they assembled at my house and insisted on seeing me. After a few commonplace expressions of condolence, one of their number informed me that a report having reached them of my intention of retiring to a monastery, they had come to declare to me their determination. Should I attempt to carry out this design, no matter how distant, no matter how sacred the place of my retreat, they

would trace me out, and tear me from it with violence. They even hinted that should I remain here much longer in my present unprotected state——” (Here the poor girl paused, trembling and weeping, and clung to Macrina as if for protection and safety.) “Oh, my mother, my mother!—you knew and loved her;—only let me stay with you—only keep me near you!”

Where was Macrina’s austerity and rigour now, as she soothed and comforted the desolate orphan? “But the alternative, my child?” she said, gently, after a little while. Emmelia shuddered. “Did they insist that you should select one of their number for a husband?”

“No,” replied Emmelia, “but that I should at once declare my choice of a husband; and ever since the dawn of reason, as I have told you, I have looked upon myself, with the approbation of both my dear parents, as promised to God.”

“But, my child, it appears that this holy project of yours cannot now be carried out. Perhaps it is God’s will that you should have the double

merit both of the desire itself and the sacrifice you may have to make of it. He may destine you, after all, to serve Him in another path, holy also, though not so holy. The names of wife and mother are sacred as well as that of virgin. Yes, the more I reflect on it the more convinced I am that there is but one course open to you, and that the hand of God is here. Did we live in happier times, I know not that I should venture to give you this advice; but as it is, I ask you to commend the matter to God in prayer, and then to look around you, calmly and dispassionately, and see if there is no one to whose protection you could safely commit yourself, in whom you could have that confidence, and for whom you could feel that respect which alone secures happiness in the married state."

"Chide me as you will," said Emmelia, with ingenuous simplicity, "I can never conceal the truth: as you spoke I thought of—Basil!"

"And why should I chide you for that?" asked Macrina, smiling. "Had you not mentioned him I think I should."

"Oh, say no more, mother," cried Emmelia; "I know you would fain spare me some of the confusion with which my hasty, thoughtless words now overwhelm me. Would that I could recall them;—but you will forget them, will you not? I have the greatest esteem for Basil. I know he is my friend. I feel that I could apply to him in any emergency; and then, when you spoke of confidence and respect, his image naturally presented itself to my mind; but I do not mean—I had no thought of anything else. And as for him! Why, he is so lofty, so perfect, so far above all such things! His mind is ever occupied with serious subjects; only charity ever brings him down to this nether world at all. He has always been kind to me; but I know it is that he pities my childishness and inexperience, and feels for the difficulties of my position. For the rest I verily believe," she added, with an effort to speak lightly, "that did he find my old nurse, Melania, waiting to receive him in my place at his next visit, he would spend the evening in her society, and listen with

polite attention to her voluble discourse without ever perceiving the difference."

"Emmelia," replied Macrina, "however impossible or improbable it may appear to you, I think you will believe me when I tell you that Basil has loved you ever since he first beheld you. No secret of his heart was ever concealed from me; so that I know how that first impression grew and strengthened as he saw more of you, and witnessed your devotion to your mother, and the manner in which you conducted yourself in many a trying circumstance. But several causes prevented his taking the initiative in the matter: in the first place, you are rich, and he is at present, at least, poor; and then *he* also knew your secret desire. Only this morning did he inform me of it, and tell me that he had placed his fate in the hands of Almighty God, asking Him, if He had decreed this union, to bring it about Himself in the manner that would leave no doubt that it was indeed His will. And do you not think that God has heard his prayer? But

it is not I who should tell you all this. I will send Basil to you, and you can give him your final decision."

When Macrina left her, Emmelia fell on her knees before the rude crucifix, which was the only ornament of the simple apartment, and prayed for some moments with intense fervour. In that brief space her resolution was taken, and when she heard Basil's step at the door she rose, and advanced courageously to meet him. Blushing, indeed, but with childlike candour and confidence, she stretched out her hands to him, saying: "Basil, will you take care of me? I am afraid I shall be a great trouble, and very little help to you; but will you have me all the same? And, Basil, you know that God has, and will ever have, the first place in my heart; but, if you like, you shall have the second."

For a moment it seemed as if the shock of sudden joy had been too much for Basil; the strong man trembled, and his eyes were very dim; but, recovering himself, his heart went up to heaven in one fervent, "My God, I thank Thee,"

and then he looked as calmly as he could down on the flushed, innocent face upraised to his, and took the little outstretched hands into his strong grasp.

“Emmelia,” he said, gravely, “I accept the trust. I am quite willing that mine should be but the second place in your heart. I, too, love God a little. We shall love and serve Him together, and I have not the slightest misgiving that our love for Him will ever interfere with our love for one another.”



III.

“THAT PART OF PARADISE WHICH MAN WITHOUT
THE PORTAL KNOWS.”

NO glowing picture of romance, no idyl ever dreamed by poet's fancy could be sweeter, purer, lovelier than was from first to last the married life of Basil and Emmelia.

How can any be still found who imagine that the love of God is a bar to all that is tenderest and deepest in human affection? Has it not, on the contrary, been proved over and over again that no earthly love is permanent and secure that is not built on the foundation of this higher love? “Thou hast made us, O Lord, for thyself,” cries out St. Augustine, “and our hearts are ever restless until they rest in Thee!” When we love

without reference to God, we set up an idol in His place, and sooner or later we discover its insufficiency to satisfy us. The bright painting and gilding wears off after a while, and nothing remains but the bare repulsive wood. Our hearts are made for the Infinite; is it any wonder the finite should always come just short of filling them? It is an ideal that we worship; we expect perfection, perfect sympathy, perfect love; can we be surprised that, perhaps through no fault of those on whom we had set our hearts, these hearts are turned back upon themselves with a nameless, aching disappointment? The only chance for two beings linked by such a love is that they should be divided by some sudden catastrophe before the time of disenchantment comes. Then their affection, relegated to its proper region of dreams and unrealities may drag out an unhealthy existence—but for how long? It cannot follow the beloved one to the other world; it is a flower that could never bloom in the pure atmosphere of heaven. The only love that endures on earth, the only love

that passes on to heaven is the love that is founded on God.

When God is enthroned in his proper place in the heart, all is order, all is peace, all is happiness. We love as tenderly, perhaps more tenderly than others, the dear earthly friends He gives us, but we do not look for perfection in them. We know where alone that is to be found. For the rest we bear and forbear, sometimes meeting with slight disappointments, but receiving again rich compensations, more than we could have expected or hoped for ; and at the worst we always have that first, best, changeless, satisfying love to fall back upon.

When creatures are loved with God, for God, in God, that love is not based on fleeting personal charms, or natural endowments, but on the little ray of God's beauty, the little spark of His goodness that has touched and transfigured their souls. Time's icy breath can never chill such love ; it will grow and strengthen with the years, and only reach its full perfection in our Father's eternal Home.

Emmelia and Basil's love was of this nature. The gifts and qualities which had secured their esteem and affection for one another before marriage were solid, real, lasting, and therefore longer and more intimate acquaintance only increased that esteem and affection. Basil had admired in Emmelia that sweet self-forgetfulness, that thoughtfulness for others, that straightforward fearless honesty and simplicity which were her most striking characteristics ; he found them more and more to be admired as the days went by ; while a thousand other charming qualities, which he had scarcely suspected at first, revealed themselves to his watchful eyes. Emmelia had felt the strength and power of Basil's character. She looked up to him with entire confidence, and a respect mingled with a certain awe, his decisions were final, his will was law. This submission, not blindly given, was never withdrawn, for its motive ever existed ; and she, too, made strange, sweet discoveries in that strong, manly heart unveiled so completely to her gaze.

Shortly after their marriage, Macrina's former possessions in Neo-Cæsarea were restored to her, and she was the first to propose to her son and his wife that she should repair thither to administer that property, while they should proceed to Cappadocia, to take possession of Emmelia's paternal estates. Strong and self-denying to the end, Macrina appeared to feel the separation from her idolized son, and her new-found but cherished daughter less than they did ; and when, at the very last, Basil and Emmelia implored her to revoke her decision and accompany them to Cæsarea, she jestingly rebuked them for their presumption in fancying their society of such importance to her, and assured them that they would miss her long before she should have had time to notice their absence. “I shall have so many more important things to think of,” she added ; “after all these years of neglect, affairs must be at a pretty pass in my old home. I have already multitudes of improvements and plans in my head, from which you, foolish children, would only distract me. No, no ; you

shall come and see me by-and-by, and admire duly all I have done. Besides you have promised to send me your first little boy as a substitute for —— ”

Here she met Basil's glance fixed upon her with such tender, sorrowful pleading that she almost broke down. But her weakness was of brief duration. She cheered and encouraged them both, and the dreaded hour of separation came and passed over, and Basil and Emmelia were alone together.

On their arrival in Cappadocia, they began at once the manner of life in which they ever after persevered. The first hours of each day were given exclusively to God, the entire household assembling for the morning oblation. Together Basil and Emmelia assisted at the offices of the Church, together they approached to receive their God beneath those mysterious symbols, by means of which He has satisfied His longing desire to be ever with the children of men.

After the morning repast Basil had his books and the superintendence of their large estates,

Emmelia her household duties, her needle-work—in which, we are told, she was a great proficient—and her offices of charity. But they somehow managed to be never very long apart. They would visit the poor together, and reverently attend to the needs of the many pilgrims who came to seek their hospitality. Both had the same inclination to abstinence, mortification, and the practice of every virtue, and mutually lent each other powerful assistance and support.

But, oh, the delightful evenings, how they both looked forward to them! When the cares and labours of the day were over, and when, beneath the spreading trees in summer, or by the glowing hearth in winter, they poured out their hearts to one another in the sweetest familiar converse. There was never a shadow of reserve between them. Basil asked Emmelia's advice on every point connected with the management of their affairs, and was often astonished at the sagacity with which her simple, truthful nature detected at once the right course to be taken on difficult occa-

sions ; while she never feared to weary him with the details of all her little household plans and projects, and always sought his counsel and assistance in more serious matters which would sometimes arise.

Then Basil would read to her passages from his favourite authors, and explain to her the less abstruse details of those sciences in which he took so much delight, directing her attention, for instance, to the course of the stars that shone down upon them night after night in unrivalled splendour through the cloudless eastern sky. Or what she loved still better, he would comment with that matchless eloquence of his, on passages from the most sublime of all poems, the inspired Book of Books, and they would both lose themselves in rapturous contemplation of the God of their hearts, and of His wondrous dealings with men.

Again, Emmelia would sing sweet, low-toned psalms and sacred hymns ; and Basil, sitting there listening to her melodious voice, and gazing on her radiant face, lighted up with fervent piety and

perfect happiness, would again and again return heartfelt thanks to the Giver of all good gifts for the priceless treasure He had bestowed on him, and implore His continued blessing on them both. Macrina was not forgotten in their conversations, nor Emmelia's parents ; and they would sometimes, though more rarely, speak of the little faces they expected to see around them one day, and form grave plans for the education and training of those beings as yet existing only in Dream-land.

The day closed, as it had begun, with prayers in common, and the singing of a portion of the Church's office. At intervals all through the day, indeed, the chanting of psalms and sacred hymns was kept up in that holy house. Emmelia and her maid servants sang as they worked, and soon the silvery voices of children were heard mingling in the strains.

Was not this a happy life, as happy as can be imagined this side of Paradise ? True they were not wholly exempt from trial. The first of those little faces they had looked out for so eagerly

only smiled on them a few weeks, and then God took it to be the first of a new family in heaven ; but as the young parents stood hand in hand by the tiny grave, they felt the loss but drew them if possible closer to one another, and to Him who had first given them their little treasure, and then in His wise love recalled it to Himself. Then their promise to the grandmother obliged them to part with their little Basil just when he was at the most attractive age ; but they were too unselfish to grieve long over this separation, and the delight of the aged Macrina at the possession of the child more than rewarded them for their sacrifice.

Of course they had their share, too, in the inevitable crosses and troubles which the mere fact of living entails upon Eve's luckless children ; but, take it for all in all, could there be a happier life, even looking only to this world, and that precisely because its brightest brightness arose from anticipations of a still fairer land beyond the grave, whither their hearts ever tended, and where the choicest of their hopes were stored. No need

had they of expedients to pass time or drown thought, no need of exciting pleasure or the bustle of society. Time flew all too quickly for the many useful works which filled each day; but his course was not too swift when they remembered that the speeding years were bearing them nearer and nearer to their true Home and to the bosom of their Father.



IV.

“DIVIDING THE CARES OF EXISTENCE, BUT DOUBLING
ITS HOPES AND ITS JOYS.”

BECAUSE thou hast asked this thing,” said the Lord to Solomon, “and hast not asked for thyself long life, nor riches, nor the lives of thy enemies, but hast asked for thyself wisdom to discern judgment: behold I have done for thee according to thy words, and have given thee a wise and understanding heart, insomuch that there hath been no one like thee before thee, nor shall be after thee. Yea, and the things also which thou didst not ask, I have given thee; to wit, riches and glory, so that no one hath been like thee among the kings of all days heretofore” (3 Kings, iii. 11-13). Is not this ever God’s way of acting? He presents Himself

to us in youth, and asks us to choose between His service and that of the world; between the immediate good things of time and the future riches of eternity; and if we are so wise as to take Him for our Master, and make our election of heavenly treasures—although it is only our own great incalculable gain—it seems as if He were so gratified, so surprised, almost so pathetically fearful lest we should come to repent our choice, that He cannot wait for eternity to give us the goods we have chosen, but must needs pour out upon us into the bargain all earthly blessings. How generous, how lavish, how uncalculating a Master, and how grudging the service He receives! And there is this great difference between the effect of temporal prosperity thus gratuitously bestowed by God on His faithful servants, and the same voluntarily sought and enjoyed by the votaries of the world. God's gifts never injure the recipient: there is nothing deteriorating in their influence. This is best seen when reverses come. As a recent writer has well observed: “There is in the happiest life

when it is ordered aright, that is, when its duties are daily considered and faithfully accomplished, there is in such a life a latent preparation for the most violent shocks of adversity ; and when they suddenly come, it is surprising to find that they who seemed to enjoy more than others the good things they possessed are the best able to resign themselves to their loss with firmness and serenity.”

Basil and Emmelia sought first the kingdom of God, and all these other good things were added unto them—the hundred-fold heaped up and flowing over. Besides that best of earthly joys—the happiness they found in one another—they enjoyed abundance of worldly wealth. Extensive possessions were theirs in Cappadocia, Pontus, and Lesser Armenia ; and they made the best possible use of their riches, which they looked upon merely as a trust. Following the advice of St. Paul, they devoted half their goods to the service of the Lord and the use of the poor—a thing which St. Gregory Nazianzen says was rare before their time, but which their example rendered henceforth frequent.

Still greater was the blessing God granted them in giving them a numerous family, every member of which was eminent for sanctity, those that embraced the married state and remained in the world being, St. Gregory assures us, no less distinguished for piety than those who served God in holy virginity. Of their nine children, who lived to a mature age, four are canonized saints of the Church: St. Macrina, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Peter of Sebaste. Naucratius, another of the sons, was a holy solitary, and the four daughters who married were, as we have said, illustrious for perfection in that state. How much of the future sanctity of these servants of God was due to the pure atmosphere of their home life, to the example of their holy parents, and to the excellent education which they received at their hands!

Their eldest child was a daughter, Macrina, named after her saintly grandmother, who, while playfully regretting the delay in the appearance of *her* little Basil, rejoiced with the happy parents over her birth. A few years later she was glad-

dened by a visit from her son and Emmelia, who brought with them their eldest boy—the future illustrious Doctor of the Church—a very counterpart of the first Basil. He was a delicate child. His brother, St. Gregory of Nyssa, tells us that he was the fruit of his mother's prayers, and that being attacked by serious illness shortly after his birth, she also obtained for him restoration to health. We can imagine Emmelia trembling lest the Reaper of the Flowers should seize this little blossom also; and we can understand how she wrestled with God to retain him, less for her own sake than for her husband, already full of pride in the son bearing his name, and the aged grandmother who was looking out so eagerly for the bright young presence that was to cheer her lonely home. Basil was spared, but he was ever to lead a suffering life.

The parents delayed as long as possible their return to Cæsarea, but at last they had to say adieu to Macrina, whom they were never to see again in this life, and to their child. Far greater was their

grief than his. "Children have no past or future, they enjoy the present;" and the little Basil, the centre of an adoring household, the idol of his fond grandmother's heart, soon forgot the noble father and the lovely young mother, who had wept so much at parting with him.

We know what is proverbially the fate of grandmothers' children, but we must not forget that Macrina was a saint. She lent her aid in making Basil a saint also. Long afterwards he was accustomed to dwell lovingly on those childish days, and to declare that never during his whole life did he lose the impressions of piety which the exhortations and still more the example of his holy grandmother left on his tender mind. Eagerly did he drink in her recollections of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus, and never was he weary of her stories of the days of persecution and of the wanderings and hardships which she and all her family had endured for the Faith. Thus his heart was early fired with enthusiasm for the cause of the Church, while he was drawn by the example of those holy confessors to

despise earthly allurements, and to stand courageous and firm against error in every form, and the encroachments of sinful power. Love of mortification and penance was another fruit of her teaching; and his position in that household, without playmates of his age, almost the only confidant and friend of one so renowned, so venerable, engendered precociously that gravity and proud reserve which ever distinguished him.

Meantime his father and mother pursued their round of home duties, sweetly varied now by the presence of their children; for their eldest-born was soon the centre of a large group of little brothers and sisters. If the younger Basil was the counterpart of his father, the second Macrina was another Emmelia. Though all her children were inexpressibly dear to this good mother, her deepest tenderness seems ever to have been poured out on this first daughter, who was in every way deserving of it. During her infancy she would hardly ever suffer her to leave her own arms, and after being her nurse she became her teacher.

Macrina appears to have been endowed with the choicest gifts of nature and of grace : a penetrating intellect and powerful mind, a strong and loving heart, a soul entirely devoted to heavenly things, all set off and enhanced by the lesser advantages of remarkable beauty and gracious, winning manners. Her brothers, illustrious Doctors and Rulers of the Church, ever reverenced her counsels, and were guided by her decisions; and in the hour of trial and affliction it was upon Macrina that the entire family depended for comfort and support. When she was twelve years of age her father promised her in marriage, but her betrothed died soon after. He was a pious youth, whose admiration for Macrina had led him to follow her footsteps in the paths of sanctity. Macrina would never again hear of marriage. Her answer always was that death was not a final separation, and that the husband her father had chosen for her awaited her beyond the grave ; but, in fact, she regarded the event as a manifestation of God's will that she should serve Him in the holy state of virginity.

From this time forward, entirely detached from earth, her soul seemed to dwell by anticipation in the heavenly country, whilst she discharged all her duties with as much care and diligence as if they were of paramount importance in her eyes.

Emmelia's next child, Naucratius, was the light of the house. He was the handsomest of the family, full of talent, but so overflowing with young life and buoyant spirits, that he could with difficulty be brought to apply himself to regular study. Up and down the house all day long resounded his bounding step, his ringing laugh. At all sorts of unexpected hours Emmelia had grown accustomed to see his bright sunny face peeping in at her door, asking the permission to enter, which could scarcely be denied, though farewell had forthwith to be said to all serious occupation. In a moment his arms would be round his mother's neck, and he would be pouring out the tale of some wonderful recent adventure; or he would have playfully snatched book or work from his grave elder sister, striving to entice her

into a chase after him for the recovery of her property ; and, as no one could resist Naucratius, you may be sure he often succeeded. Then he would be off again, out in the fields now, sporting with the young lambs, climbing trees, leaping, swimming, as if he never could weary out the inexhaustible activity and energy within him. He delighted in all manly exercises and games of skill, and his father, who was his instructor and chief playmate, often found he had to exert himself to the utmost against his alert young antagonist.

Of course he was always at mischief. Not a breakage occurred, not a thing went astray in the house, but Naucratius was sure to be the culprit. He was ever the first to accuse himself, if some other delightful piece of fun had not meantime driven the memory of the first mishap quite out of his head ; for he was truth itself, and so affectionate and good-natured, that even those who suffered most from his pranks could scarcely find it in their hearts to upbraid him. With the servants he was a special favourite, and all the poor people round

about had stories to tell of his generous kindness towards them. But his devotion to his mother was, perhaps, his most striking characteristic. Notwithstanding his apparent levity and thoughtlessness, it was ever Naucratius that hastened to render her the little services that mothers love to receive from their sons. He watched every expression of her countenance, he divined her least wishes, and, if she were ill, anxious, or suffering in any way, it was touching to see how the vivacious boy would curb his overflowing spirits, and sit by her, and minister to her comfort and convenience with all the gentle tenderness of a loving daughter. No wonder that Emmelia felt all a mother's pride in him, and rejoiced at his noble qualities ; yet she trembled at the thought of the dangers to which that volatile, generous, unsuspecting nature would be exposed in its contact with the world ; and, among all her children, the future welfare of *this* dear son formed, perhaps, the object of her most frequent and fervent prayers to God.

His younger brother, Gregory, was a clever,

sedate boy, who might often have read Naucratius a lecture ; and indeed that is just what would have suited him, for he was very fond of speechifying. Studious and quiet, generally, he, too, had his moments of ardour. His delight was in the old poetic legends enshrined in the pages of the Greek and Latin bards. With most of these he was familiar long before he could read a line of the works themselves : for his father was accustomed to reward diligent application each day with a story ; selecting for this purpose episodes from the Bible History, or passages from those authors whose prose and verse would form the chief matter of the boys' study later on. Thus Gregory became acquainted with the old world myths, and all the most striking events in ancient history. Naucratius would have preferred a game of romps ; but, as he was seldom in the position to claim the recompense, Gregory's tastes carried the day. Basil, we know, was an orator, and the fire of eloquence and the true spirit of poetry that breathed through these recitals stirred the heart of his young listener, and awakened a kindred

flame. Full of glowing enthusiasm, he would forthwith place himself in the position of his heroes, and proceed to enact their parts. Now it would be Achilles exulting over the dead body of Hector, again Lycurgus administering justice, Leonidas at the head of the Three Hundred, Æneas bidding farewell to Dido, or Theseus slaughtering the Minotaur. He tried hard to get Naucratius to enter into the spirit of the scenes, but with little success. Naucratius could not understand *making believe*, and soon wearied of Gregory's displays of rhetoric. Probably his always having to act the conquered foe had something to do with his want of appreciation of the performance. We can imagine positions more favourable to enthusiasm than lying prostrate beneath the foot of an orator, while his sword (even though it be but a wooden one) is pointed at your throat, and he belabours you with abusive epithets. Be that as it may, it is certain that often when Gregory, in the person of Achilles, apostrophised the lifeless body of the once mighty

Hector; or as *Aeneas* moralised from afar on the burning pile in which the hapless Dido was even then sacrificing herself for his love—the representative of that interesting lady would spoil the pathos just at the most thrilling moment, by setting off in full career after a favourite dog; or, “the lifeless clay of the mighty dead,” in spite of all Achilles’ asseverations that it was “cold, and stark, and senseless,” would spring up with an astonishingly lively bound, and rush off to lavish caresses on the mother looking on. Gregory had to give up Naucratius in the end, and take his little sisters for auxiliaries.

Four girls separated Gregory from Peter, the Benjamin of the family, who, at the present stage of our narrative, had not yet made his appearance: indeed, most of what we have said above must be taken as anticipating the course of time.

Father and mother divided between them the instruction of the children—Basil undertaking the education of the boys, while Emmelia devoted herself to Macrina and her sisters—but in all that con-

cerned their religious and moral training, both laboured for all with equal solicitude. In their evening conversations, which were as sweet to them as ever, they communicated to each other the experiences of the day, they traced the gradual unfolding of character in those young souls, and consulted together as to the best manner of correcting what was faulty, and developing what was excellent in each. Their anxiety about Naucratius' heedlessness, Gregory's over great love for secular studies and ambition for display, Macrina's pensiveness, and Basil's proud reserve, was alleviated by mutual sympathy; and then in the evening prayer their hearts ascended together to the mercy seat, to implore for their beloved charge all the graces and blessings they needed, and for themselves the light and strength required to fulfil their difficult, responsible, but still delightful duty.

We have spoken of Macrina's pensiveness—it was her only fault, if it could be called a fault. The careful mother saw that there was future

danger, at least, in this disposition if not combated, and so directed her chief efforts against it. Perceiving the bent of Macrina's inclination, and feeling sure that God had special designs for this favoured child, Emmelia did not allow her to occupy her mind and load her memory with the verses of the heathen poets, as was then customary, but selected for her perusal such portions of the Holy Scriptures as were suited to her capacity. Macrina delighted especially in the Gospels and the Epistles of St. Paul, and easily learned by heart the Psalms and the Book of Wisdom. Then the mother taught her to sing these inspired Canticles during her manual occupations, and she soon took so much pleasure in this song that we are told "it arose with her in the morning, and went to rest with her at night." To counterbalance the effects of her serious studies, Emmelia kept her busily occupied at other times with household matters, and Macrina soon became her mother's rival in embroidery and all kinds of needle-work.

The only event that interrupted the calm

monotony of those peaceful years was when sad news came from Pontus, announcing, first the serious illness, and then the death of the good old grandmother. Basil travelled to Neo-Cæsarea to assist at his beloved mother's obsequies, and to bring home his eldest son. Father and son mingled their tears over the grave of her who had stood in almost the same relation to both of them, and this common affliction formed a strong bond of union between them. Then the shy, reserved boy was ushered into the new world of a large family circle. He had come to know something of his father during the journey from Pontus, and, as we have said, their mutual loss was a link between them. His mother's first embrace revealed to him the secret of those many dreams that had been wont to haunt his childish pillow in Macrina's solitary house, when he had felt just such arms around him, and seen just such a sweet face bending over him; but the crowd of strange little brothers and sisters gazing on him with amazement in their round eyes, and the numerous

servants, and the life, and the stir ! He could not get used to it. He would have given anything to love these children, to have them love him ; but he knew not how to set about it. He could not interest himself in their childish pursuits, and they seemed to care nothing for the subjects dear to him. The life he had hitherto led had accustomed him to have an attentive ear always ready to listen to him, and a heart in which his concerns, if they did not reign supreme, were at least uppermost. How was he to find this here ? His father was kindness itself, and the hours which Basil now began to spend in study under his direction were the most delightful in the whole day ; but the many other things his father had to occupy him were ever present to his mind ; and, although the father was always sympathetic, ready to speak to him, and anxious to invite his confidence, the boy was too sensitively alive to the importance of these other concerns, and the relative insignificance of his own, to feel at his ease with him. The same objection held almost as

fully with regard to his mother. Although he almost worshipped her, although her kiss in the morning and her blessing at night were priceless in his eyes, and although at times he threw off all reserve with her, still the same delicacy of feeling, the same fear of being obtrusive, kept him from resorting to her as he would gladly have done on every occasion, for comfort and counsel. How he envied the thoughtless confidence of that scapegrace, Naucratius ! But it was no use, he never could be like him, he was alone in the world now, and must learn to lock up all his thoughts and feelings in his own heart ; they were of no interest to anyone else. This state of mind lasted some time, and might have proved injurious to him ; but fortunately he discovered that he had all he sought in his sister Macrina. A year older than he was, her mind, as usually happens with girls of that age, was much more developed than his, and he soon felt a reliance on her judgment which lasted all his life. Nothing could be more tender and intimate than the relations soon established

between them. To Macrina did Basil detail all the wonderful legends he had heard from his grandmother ; to her did he confide his own aspirations after martyrdom, or, failing that, a life of austerity and seclusion ; while she made known to him her own longings in the same direction, her ardent desire and already formed resolve to dedicate her youth, her beauty, and her talents, exclusively to the service of God. Macrina did not fail, also, to perceive the weaker points in her brother's character, and began at once to speak to him of his faults with the greatest candour, though with the tenderest charity, and the proud Basil invariably received her admonitions in good part, and endeavoured to profit by them.

The happiness of their mutual confidence did not cause Basil and Macrina to neglect in any way their several duties. Emmelia had no reason to complain that her daughter was less diligent in her sacred studies, her embroidery, and household tasks whilst the father was astonished and delighted at the rapid progress made by young Basil in science

and literature. He also perceived already indications of that wonderful eloquence which was to render his son one of the greatest orators of the age.

So the days went by, the days and the years, happily, holily, usefully, and there really seemed no reason why they should ever come to an end. The seed was being sown by skilful hands, and was taking noiseless root in these young hearts ; bright was the prospect of the future, but there was one of the labourers destined never to behold the harvest :—

“ Oh ! tremble ye to whom hath been assign’d
A course of days composing happy months,
And they as happy years ; the present still
So like the past, and both so firm a pledge
Of a congenial future, that the wheels
Of pleasure move without the aid of hope,
For mutability is Nature’s bane;
And slighted Hope will be avenged ; and, when
Ye need her favours, ye shall find her not ;
But, in her stead, fear, doubt, and agony !”

Let us take one more look at this family picture

before we turn the page. It is a summer's evening, and Basil and Emmelia are in their old seat beneath the trees ; but they are not alone now. The younger Basil and Macrina are pacing slowly up and down in earnest conversation. A group of youngsters, with Naucratius in the midst, are engaged in a merry game at a short distance, while one very little mite is pressed close to the mother's side, absorbed in wondering admiration of the infant lying on her knees. Basil and Emmelia are still in the prime of life. He is just forty-five, she thirty-six. They are not much changed since we first saw them, and what change there is, is for the better. His face, though still grave, has lost its great sternness, the smile is more frequently on his lips, and how tender is the light in his eyes as he gazes now on her who ever reigns supreme in his heart, the ideal of his youth, the unchanging faithful friend and companion of so many happy years, incomparably dearer to him now, more prized, more precious, than on that well-remembered day when, with the fearlessness of

innocence she placed her fate in his hands. And she—see her now, as, after caressing the little one in her arms, she raises her head and returns his gaze: there is the same deep trust and reverence as of old—but, oh, how much more love! She is fair as ever, but with a sweet, matronly dignity now; there is the same honest, guileless candour about her still, but more self-command, more self-reliance. She has acquired some of his strength, while he has gained much of her sweetness.

As by an involuntary movement, Emmelia extends her hand, which is clasped by Basil, and then they glance together round the group of young faces, in which they see reflected their own early selves; and when Emmelia's eyes meet Basil's again, he sees that they are filled with unwonted tears.

"Basil, we are so happy that I feel half afraid," she murmurs; and he replies with assumed cheerfulness:

"Nay, I know well, you little hypocrite, you are just thinking, as you see how quickly these

young people are springing up around us, that you and I are beginning to go down the hill. No matter, we shall be the same to one another when we are a venerable old grandfather and grandmother, tottering along on our sticks—but that's a good way off yet. Here, Macrina, take your little charge, Peter, from your mother ; and, Basil, collect the children together ; it is just the hour for evening prayers. My darling," he whispers, as, supporting her with his strong arm, he leads her towards the house, "I fear you are not quite yourself yet. You must make haste to get strong, and take good care of yourself for my sake, for all our sakes. What would become of us, were anything to happen to you?"



V.

PARTED, BUT NOT DIVIDED.

TN truth, the Angel of Death was even then hovering over that dwelling ; but, inscrutable as ever, his design defied all calculation. Not against the fragile life just begun, not against the delicate mother was his shaft aimed : the father, the stalwart man, in the meridian of life, in the perfection of strength, was struck down. God holds in his Almighty hand the hours, and the days, and the years, the rippling waves of that strange river—Time. Death stands on the eternal shore, watching the tiny human skiffs as they speed so buoyantly along, waiting the signal to strike and sink, each in turn, under the dark wave, with a little splash more or less, and a few circling eddies, and then a silence on this side, and on the other an eternal destiny

absolutely dependent on the cargo with which the vessel was freighted at the decisive moment. O moment, key-note of eternity! art thou not in every instance determined by Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Love, and still we cry: "So soon!—such an early death!—cut off in the flower of youth!—what a calamity!"

Basil heard his call with courage and resignation. Wife and children had been inexpressibly dear to him, life had been very pleasant; but God was still dearer, and his best hopes had long been set on the life eternal, of which the brightest earthly existence is but the shadow of a shade. Calmly and peacefully he received the Church's last aids and blessings; consoled his family with brave words, assuring them that in heaven he could watch over them still more carefully and assist them still more powerfully than he had been able to do on earth; gave tender parting advice to each, recommending solemnly to his son Basil the care of his mother and of his younger brothers and sisters; and then, with his hand in his faith-

ful Emmelia's, with his last earthly thoughts and words for her, and with his eyes on the crucifix, his soul passed into the Silent Land.

We sometimes chafe at the monotony and dull level of our lives, we sometimes try to peer into the coming years, to discover if any of them hold for us some great event, some startling change—and all the while there is a great event, there is a startling change, there is a wonderful journey, there are discoveries enough to take away the breath with amazement, before you that read, and before me that write; and all this certainly, and all this soon, and all this, no matter what we are, or rather what we appear to be, in this region of appearances, of delusions, of phantasmagoria. There are no commonplace, no vulgar, no uninteresting people in the World of Realities, in the Silent Land!

Basil was dead! The seventeen years of intimate union, of unclouded harmony were over. Emmelia had to take up her life again and face the long vista of future years in which he was to

play no part. Not in the first hours of grief crushing as they were, did she taste the full bitterness of the chalice. No ; they were sweet to the days, and the months, and the years that followed ; to the time when the memory of the departed, mellowed by distance, gradually faded out of the young lives around her, or recurred as a not unpleasing recollection ; when she, she only, still felt the aching void that never could be filled ; when she only, in the solitary night, or in the midst of gay childish sports and merry laughter, still sent forth the yearning, agonising heart-cry that, if it might be so, since he could not come back to her, he would call her quickly after him. There were times when life seemed utterly impossible. Nor is there in this anything derogatory to Emmelia's submission to God's will. Only those that feel the pressure of the cross most keenly, most intensely, have the right to say, "Fiat!" Indifference, cold-heartedness, is not resignation.

Emmelia's conformity to the Divine Will was proved by acts. Her devoted service of God never

slackened. Nay, now that she had to fill the place of both parents to her fatherless children, to spend herself in labours for them, to give support, encouragement, and comfort, while she herself was for ever deprived of the aid, the strength, the guidance she had so prized, Emmelia more than ever sought assistance and consolation in God, in the exercises of religion. Into the heart of her Father in heaven did she pour out all her sorrows, her anxieties, her cares, her weariness ; to Him did she confide all those plans and projects to which there was no human ear to listen now, and peace, if not happiness, came in time. She grew to feel, too, as though God allowed Basil to share the confidence, as it were, to interest himself still for her and their dear ones ; and, as each day's sun went down, a thrill of something like joy filled her heart at the thought that nearer and nearer was coming the hour of their reunion, and that after all the delay could be but a little while.

This happy state of mind came, as we have said, in time ; but just at first the shock of such a

sorrow on her already delicate frame brought on a serious illness, which lasted several months, and left its traces behind. Then her children began to repay her the cares she had lavished on them. Basil, under the direction of his paternal uncle, Gregory, undertook the administration of their extensive possessions, and succeeded admirably. Macrina managed the household, and attended on her mother, in which office she was ably assisted by Naucratius ; she took the entire care of the little Peter, and she and Gregory continued the education of the younger children. It must be admitted that the latter were always eager to escape from their strict young pedagogues to the care of Naucratius, who was established guardian in ordinary out-of-school hours. His management of them was wonderful. In the house he kept them as quiet as mice, but amused and happy; and then every day he would lead them off to some sunny green meadow, far out of hearing, and there let them race and shout to their heart's content. The old nurse always accompanied them ; but Macrina

well knew they were quite safe with Naucratius. Reckless as he was often on his own account, no one could be more watchful and careful than he while thus discharging an office of trust.

By degrees Emmelia rallied; but for a long time she continued so weak and ailing that Macrina had to dress her every morning, and was wont to prepare with her own hands the food which she thought might tempt her delicate appetite. For a considerable period, too, this young girl, scarcely more than a child, kept for herself all the troubles and cares of the establishment, and allowed her mother to occupy herself with the children and the management of affairs only just enough to amuse and please without worrying or fatiguing her.

Emmelia's first anxiety on her recovery was about Basil. He was now thirteen, and deprived of the instruction from which he had been deriving such profit. After much prayer, and consultation with his uncle Gregory, brother to Emmelia's husband, it was determined to send Basil to the

public school of Cæsarea. Not without fear did Emmelia behold the noble youth, with his lofty aspirations, and his ignorance of evil withdrawn from the sacred shelter of home, exposed to the influence of worthless companions, about to learn his first lesson of the world and the world's ways. But she soon found that, for the present at least, the danger was modified, if not averted. Basil's pride and reserve stood him in good stead here. He made no acquaintances at the school; and while diligent in his studies, astonishing his masters by his quick intelligence, and rapidly getting ahead of all his fellow-students, he became still more noted for solid virtue and unaffected piety. Every evening he returned home, and there alone his heart and thoughts centred. To Macrina he continued to confide every event of the day, and to her prudence and wise counsel he attributed, in great part, his escape from the dangers that surrounded him and the snares laid for his inexperience. Notwithstanding the pressure of his own pursuits, he found time to assist Naucratius and

Gregory, and so ably did he direct them, that when he left for Constantinople, and they took his place at Cæsarea, their success was almost as brilliant as his own. Basil was soon declared equal in oratory to the best rhetoricians in Cappadocia, and it became necessary to remove him to a higher school. Constantinople was chosen, on account of the celebrity of its chief teacher, Libanius, then at the summit of his fame. Basil's virtues and modesty, no less than his extraordinary talents, won for him the undisguised admiration of this distinguished sophist, who was a heathen, and a bitter opponent of the Christian religion. He declares in his Epistles that to hear Basil speak in public always transported him out of himself. From the beginning he treated him as a friend rather than as a disciple, and ever after kept up a correspondence with him, and took every occasion of testifying the esteem and veneration in which he held him. Such being Basil's position at Constantinople, it is not surprising that "Ex-celsior" should soon again be his cry, and

accordingly, in 350, we find him on his way to Athens.

From the days of Pericles this city had been the abode of the Muses. It was the resort of illustrious strangers from all parts of the world, who came especially to acquire the Greek tongue in all its purity and Attic elegance. We cannot refrain from quoting here an extract from the tribute which Cardinal Newman pays to Athens in his "Office and Work of Universities :"

"If we would know what a university is, considered in its elementary idea, we must betake ourselves to the first and most celebrated home of European literature, and source of European civilisation, to the bright and beautiful Athens Athens, whose schools drew to her bosom, and then sent back again to the business of life, the youth of the western world for a long thousand years. Seated on the verge of the continent, the city seemed hardly suited for the duties of a central metropolis of knowledge ; yet, what it lost in convenience of approach it gained in its neigh-

bourhood to the traditions of the mysterious East, and in the loveliness of the region in which it lay. Hither, then, as to a sort of ideal land, where all archetypes of the great and the fair were found in substantial being, and all departments of truth explored, and all diversities of intellectual power exhibited, where taste and philosophy were majestically enthroned as in a royal court, where there was no sovereignty but that of mind, and no nobility but that of genius, where professors were rulers, and princes did homage : hither flocked the many-tongued generation, just rising or just risen into manhood, in order to gain wisdom. . . .

The political power of Athens waned and disappeared ; kingdoms rose and fell ; centuries rolled away ; they did but bring fresh triumphs to the city of the poet and the sage. There at length the swarthy Moor and Spaniard were seen to meet the blue-eyed Gaul ; and the Cappadocian, late subject of Mithridates, gazed without alarm at the haughty conquering Roman. Revolution after revolution passed over the face of Europe as well

as of Greece, but still she was there. Athens, the city of the mind, as radiant, as splendid, as delicate, as young as ever she was. Many a more fruitful coast or isle is washed by the blue *Æ*gean, many a spot is there more beautiful or sublime to see, many a territory more ample; but there was one charm in Attica, which, in the same perfection, was nowhere else. The special purity, elasticity, clearness, and salubrity of the air of Attica, fit concomitant and emblem of its genius, did this for it which earth did not: it brought out every bright hue and tender shade of the landscape over which it was spread, and would have illuminated the face even of a more bare and rugged country.

A confined triangle, perhaps fifty miles its greatest length, and thirty its greatest breadth; two elevated rocky barriers, meeting at an angle; three prominent mountains commanding the plain —Parnes, Pentelicus, and Hymettus;—an unsatisfactory soil; some streams, not always full; such is about the report which the agent of a

London company would have made of Athens. He would report that the climate was mild, the hills were limestone, there was plenty of good marble, more pasture-land than at first survey might have been expected—sufficient, certainly, for sheep and goats—fisheries productive, silver mines once but long since worked out, figs fair, oil first rate, olives in profusion. But what he would not think of noting down was, that that olive-tree was so choice in nature and so noble in shape that it excited a religious veneration, and that it took so kindly to the light soil as to expand into woods upon the open plain and to climb up and fringe the hills. He would not think of writing word to his employers how that clear air of which I have spoken brought out, yet blended and subdued the colours on the marble till they had a softness and harmony, for all their richness, which in a picture looks exaggerated, yet is after all within the truth. He would not tell how that same delicate and brilliant atmosphere freshened up the pale olive till the olive forgot its monotony,

and its cheek glowed like the arbutus or beech of the Umbrian Hills. He would say nothing of the thyme and thousand fragrant herbs which carpeted Hymettus, he would hear nothing of the hum of its bees, nor take much account of the rare flavour of its honey, since Gogo and Minorca were sufficient for the English demand. He would look over the *Ægean* from the height he had ascended ; he would follow with his eye the chain of islands which, starting from the Sunian headland, seemed to offer the fabled divinities of Attica, when they would visit their Ionian cousins, a sort of viaduct thereto across the sea ; but that fancy would not occur to him, nor any admiration of the dark violet billows, with their white edges, down below ; nor of those graceful, fan-like jets of silver upon the rocks, which slowly rise aloft like water-spirits from the deep, then shiver, and break, and spread, and shroud themselves, and disappear in a soft mist of foam ; nor of the gentle, incessant heaving and panting of the whole liquid plain ; nor of the long waves, keeping

steady time, like a line of soldiery, as they resound upon the hollow shore—he would not deign to notice that restless living element at all, except to bless his stars that he was not upon it. Nor the distinct detail, nor the refined colouring, nor the graceful outline and roseate golden hue of the jutting crags, nor the bold shadows cast from Otus or Laurium by the declining sun—our agent of a mercantile firm would not value these matters, even at a low figure. Rather we must turn for the sympathy we seek to yon pilgrim student, come from a semi-barbarous land to that small corner of the earth, as to a shrine, where he might take his fill of gazing on those emblems and coruscations of invisible unoriginate perfection. It was the stranger from a remote province, from Britain or from Mauritania, who in a scene so different from that of his chilly, woody swamps, or of his fiery choking sands, learned at once what a real university must be, by coming to understand the sort of country which was its suitable home.”

I will not excuse or justify this long quotation ;

on the contrary, I will here frankly avow that, in all that follows regarding Basil's stay in Athens, and his after life, I have taken as guide Cardinal Newman's sketch of this saint, in his "Church of the Fathers," and have, as far as possible, reproduced his own words. Why seek to trace in feeble characters on the sand what has been already carved on marble with a style of keenest steel? For me, and for all who have read these sketches, *they* form our memory of the events recorded, and if we attempt to go over the same ground, willingly or unwillingly our words run into a weak echo, a tuneless, spiritless variation of the sweet, powerful notes that are haunting our minds. Why make any excuse? Those who have never read the original will thank me, and those to whom it is familiar will thank me still more. There are just two objections: the first is, that it is scarcely fair to give the extracts in this disjointed, unconnected way. To this I answer, that to those hitherto unacquainted with the sources whence they are taken, it will do the good service of directing their

attention to the works themselves; and as for old friends, they will fill up the gaps from memory, and be pleased to prove that disadvantageous circumstances can have absolutely no effect on the intrinsic beauty of the passages themselves. The other objection is, that the very brilliancy of these precious stones only serves to throw into greater relief the indifferent quality of the metal in which they are enshrined. To this I answer—but so paltry a subject deserves no answer.



VI.

THE FRIENDS.

RESERVED and apparently self-contained natures are those to whom friendship is most necessary. The gay, the genial, the demonstrative find acquaintances like themselves in every society, and this superficial intimacy often satisfies the needs of their natures; but the shy, the so-called proud and independent, are just those who long the most for genuine friendship, who appreciate it best, who are faithful until death, and beyond it, to those they have once taken into their hearts. Such a one was Basil, now, at the age of twenty-one, thrown entirely among strangers in a foreign country. The parting from his mother and Macrina, and even from the younger children, whom he loved far more than they knew or could ever know, had

been a severe trial to him, and he was very sad. He missed, above all, the familiar intercourse so many years maintained between his sister and himself, and foresaw that his life at this bustling, noisy university would be a dreary and solitary one. But God was providing for his needs. Just before his arrival at Athens another young Cappadocian had appeared in its schools: this was Gregory of Nazianzus, whose name was henceforth to be indissolubly united with that of Basil. At the very outset Gregory was useful to him. Let us hear Cardinal Newman:—"A freshman soon got experience for himself of the ways and manners prevalent in Athens. Such a one as he had hardly entered the city when he was caught hold of by a party of the academic youth, who proceeded to practise on his awkwardness and his ignorance. At first sight one wonders at their childishness; but the like conduct obtained in the mediæval universities . . . So I suppose we must attribute it to something or other in human nature. Meanwhile, there stands the new-comer,

surrounded by a circle of his new associates, who forthwith proceed to frighten, and to banter, and to make a fool of him, to the extent of their wit. Some address him with mock politeness, others with fierceness, and so they conduct him in solemn procession across the Agora to the baths ; and as they approach they dance about him like madmen. But this was to be the end of his trial, for the bath was a sort of initiation. He thereupon received the pallium, or university gown, and was suffered by his tormentors to depart in peace. One alone is recorded as having been exempted from this persecution ; it was a youth graver and loftier than even St. Gregory himself ; but it was not from his force of character, but at the instance of Gregory, that he escaped. Gregory was his bosom friend, and was ready in Athens to shelter him when he came. It was another saint and another doctor : the great Basil, then, (it would appear) as Gregory, but a catechumen of the Church.”

Elsewhere Cardinal Newman says that “fame

had reported Basil's merits before he came, and he seems to have made his way, in a place of all others most difficult to a stranger, with a facility peculiar to himself." And again : " He was one of those men who seem by a sort of fascination to draw others around them even without wishing it. One might have deemed that his gravity and reserve would have kept them at a distance ; but, almost in spite of himself, he was the centre of a knot of youths, who, pagans as most of them were, used Athens honestly for the purposes for which they professed to seek it ; and, disappointed and displeased with the place himself, he seems, nevertheless, to have been the means of their profiting by its advantages. Here we have a glimpse of the better kind of society among the students of Athens ; and it is to the credit of the parties composing it that such young men as Gregory and Basil, men as intimately connected with Christianity, as they were known in the world, should hold so high a place in their esteem and love."

But though Basil soon found himself admired

and respected by his fellow-students, Gregory was his only friend. He was born in Nazianzus, not far from Cæsarea, about 329, and could also number saints in his family circle. His mother was St. Nonna, his brother and sister are inscribed on the Church's calendar as SS. Cæsarius and Gorgona. At the time of his birth his father was a pagan, or rather an Hypsistarian, a sort of mongrel religionist, part Jew, part Pagan. He was converted by his wife's efforts and prayers, and afterwards showed so much zeal for the interests of religion that he was chosen Bishop of Nazianzus.

Gregory and his brother Cæsarius had studied at Cæsarea, where he first met Basil, and afterwards at Alexandria, and his reputation and acquirements were equal to those of his brilliant friend. "It often happens," says Cardinal Newman, "that men of very dissimilar talents and tastes are attracted together by their very dissimilitude. They live in intimacy for a time, perhaps a long time, till their circumstances alter, or some sudden

event comes to try them. Then the peculiarities of their respective minds are brought out into action, and quarrels ensue, which end in coolness or separation. It would not be right or true to say that this is exemplified in the instance of the two blessed apostles, whose ‘sharp contention’ is related in the Book of Acts, for they had been united in spirit once for all by a divine gift ; and yet their strife reminds us of what takes place in life continually. And it so far resembled the everyday quarrels of friends in that it arose from difference of temper and character in those favoured servants of God. The zealous heart of the Apostle of the Gentiles endured not the presence of one who had swerved in his course ; the indulgent spirit of Barnabas felt that a first fault ought not to be a last trial. Such are the two main characters which are found in the Church—high energy, and sweetness of temper : far from incompatible, of course, united in apostles, though in different relative proportions, yet only partially combined in ordinary Christians, and often

altogether parted from each other. 'This contrast of character, leading first to intimacy, then to differences, is interestingly displayed, though painfully, in one passage of the history of Basil and Gregory—Gregory the affectionate, the tender-hearted, the man of quick feelings, the accomplished, the eloquent preacher; and Basil, the man of firm resolve and hard deeds, the high-minded ruler of Christ's flock, the diligent labourer in the field of ecclesiastical politics. Thus they differed; yet not as if they had not much in common still; both had the blessing and the discomfort of a sensitive mind; both were devoted to an ascetic life; both were men of classical tastes; both were special champions of the Catholic Creed; both were skilled in argument and successful in their use of it; both were in the highest place in the Church—the one Exarch of Cæsarea, the other Patriarch of Constantinople.' But at present the very contrast in their dispositions drew them towards one another, each had just what the other lacked, and

as yet their individual idiosyncrasies were not likely to clash. They became inseparable. Gregory writes in after years :—

“ Athens and letters followed on my stage,
Others may tell how I encountered them :—

* * * * *

There, too, I gained a further gift of God,
Who made me friends with one of wisdom high,
Without compeer in learning and in life.
Ask ye his name ?—in sooth, 'twas Basil, since
My life's great gain, and then my fellow dear
In home, and studious search, and knowledge earned.
May I not boast how in our day we moved
A truest pair, not without name in Greece ;
Had all things common, and one only soul
In lodgment of a double outward frame ?
Our special bond, the thought of God above
And the high longing after holy things.
And each of us was bold to trust in each,
Unto the emptying of our deepest hearts :
And then we loved the more, for sympathy
Pleaded in each and knit the twain in one.”

“ We had the same end in view, we were both in search of the same treasure, Virtue—we sought to

make our union unending, by preparing ourselves for eternal happiness. We held no communication with those among our companions whose morals were at all relaxed, and only sought the society of those whose modesty, reserve, and wisdom could urge us forward in the practice of virtue. We knew but two streets in Athens—the one led to the Church, the other to the public schools."

Thus distinguished for virtue, the friends were equally in the first rank in science and literature. We are told of Basil, in particular, that besides his proficiency in rhetoric, poetry, philosophy, and dialectics, he possessed a knowledge of geometry, astronomy, and medicine, which placed him on a level with the ablest men of the day. Thus Basil and Gregory seemed to have every prize in store that a secular ambition could desire. "Their names," continues Cardinal Newman, "were known far and wide, their attainments acknowledged by enemies, and they themselves personally popular in their circle of acquaintance. It was under these circumstances that they took

the extraordinary resolution of quitting the world together—extraordinary the world calls it, utterly perplexed to find that any conceivable objects can, by any sane person, be accounted better than its own gifts and favours. They resolved to seek baptism of the Church, and to consecrate their gifts to the service of the giver. With characters of mind very different—the one grave, the other lively; the one desponding, the other sanguine; the one with deep feelings, the other with feelings acute and warm—they agreed together in holding that the things that are seen are not to be compared to the things that are not seen. They quitted the world, while it entreated them to stay. What passed when they were about to leave Athens represents, as in a figure the parting which they and the world took of each other. When the day of valediction arrived, their companions and equals, nay, some of their tutors, came about them, and resisted their departure by entreaties, arguments, and even by violence. This occasion showed also their respective dispositions; for

the firm Basil persevered and went; the tender-hearted Gregory was softened and stayed a while longer. Basil, indeed, in spite of the reputation which attended him, had from the first felt disappointment with the celebrated abode of philosophy and literature, and seems to have given up the world from a simple conviction of its emptiness. ‘He,’ says Gregory, ‘according to the way of human nature, when, on suddenly falling in with what we hoped to be greater, we find it short of its fame, experienced some such feeling, began to be sad, grew impatient, and could not congratulate himself on his place of residence. He sought an object which hope had drawn for him, and he called Athens, “hollow blessedness.”’ Gregory himself, on the contrary, looked at things more cheerfully, as the following sentences show:—‘Thus Basil; but I removed the greater part of his sorrow, meeting it with reason, and smoothing it with reflections, and saying (what was most true) that character is not at once understood, nor except by long time and perfect intimacy; nor

are studies estimated by those who are submitted to them, on a brief trial and by slight evidence. Thus I reassured him, and by continual trials of each other I bound myself to him.'—
(ORAT. 43.)"



VII.

“ FOLLOW ME.”

WITH the plaudits of his fellow-students ringing in his ears, and his heart beating still with the excitement and struggle, out of which he had come victorious, Basil left Athens, and turned his steps homeward. Very like a hero he felt himself. The world, whose coy smiles are so hard to win ; the world that finds so many willing to serve her gratis, to waste youth, and health, and energy, and life itself in pursuit of phantom joys and dignities which still elude their grasp ; that world had come to him, had laid her treasures at his feet, had held out to him her cup of delights ; and he had spurned her from him, trampled on her proffered favours,

dashed the goblet from her hand, and turned his back with haughty contempt on the vain dignities and honours with which she strove to win his love. Fools might still be found to value such things, but for him he could not be deceived with outward show; he had fathomed them all, he knew their hollowness, their emptiness, their worthlessness.

Then that parting scene ; even those that grieved to lose him had been forced to admire his firmness of resolve. “ And Gregory had yielded, he said indeed, only for a while. Poor Gregory ! ” Was it that Basil checked himself here on the point of uttering that prayer, the only one we read of in the Gospel that our Lord did *not* commend ; or was it the near approach of home, the sight of familiar scenes and objects, that soothed and calmed his mind ? His mood changed. Was he so certain that his mother and Macrina would receive him with enthusiasm, and applaud his design ? His mother, who had so dreaded for him the influence of that world ; his sister who, almost a

stranger to its ways, had still in her inspired innocence, first put him on his guard against its snares, would they not rejoice with exceeding great joy when they learned that he had passed unscathed through the fiery ordeal, and had now determined to break for ever with his vanquished foe? It seemed impossible to doubt their satisfaction, their approval, and yet, and yet—. In anticipation, he felt Macrina's keen, clear eyes reading him through, and he began to feel anything but confident as to the result of the scrutiny. He must look deeper into his own heart. Did conscience speak in unfaltering tones, was he satisfied himself, was he happy, was he at rest, now that the great step was taken? If not, what was he doing? He was but casting off one delusion to embrace another and a subtler deception.

Absorbed in anxious thought, Basil drew near his native city. From a distance he perceived an unusual stir in its streets, and soon crowds of people came pouring out of its gates, and spread

along the road by which he was approaching. Hastening his steps to discover the cause of this commotion, what was his astonishment to learn that all this great concourse had come together to do honour to himself, the solitary traveller, the scarcely more than youth of twenty-six! Magistrates and nobles, clergy and scholars, they flocked around him, they saluted him as the glory of their city and country, they extolled his wisdom, his talents, his virtues, and finally they offered to place all the educational establishments in the province under his direction, if only he would settle down among them, and afford his fellow-townsmen the inestimable benefit of his presence, his example, and his teaching.

It was a moment of trial for Basil. True, his ambition was too lofty to aim at offices and dignities; but, nevertheless, there was in his heart a thirst for glory, a longing for renown, a desire that his name might live for ever in the admiring memory of ages yet to come. Was not this public recognition of his merit the beginning of that

imperishable fame? Had the temptation come upon him sooner who knows what might have been the result, but as it was those sobering thoughts which had just now occupied him had steadied his mind. Graciously thanking the citizens for their flattering offers, he declined to accept them, but promised to make Cæsarea his home for some time to come, and assured them that during his residence there it would be his pleasure and his pride to render himself useful to his fellow-citizens in any way in his power. His modest words were applauded to the echo, and his progress to his mother's house assumed the air of a triumph.

And now escaping with difficulty from his enthusiastic followers, he entered the quiet precincts of his home. What a tranquillity and hush there was about the place! A delicious calm came down on his throbbing heart, like soft rain on the drooping flowers in hot summer weather. Had not time stood still here, during those five long years so full of events for him? No, there was a change. Were these tall, graceful maidens the

little sisters he had left; and could that sturdy little fellow clinging to Macrina's hand be the baby Peter? And his mother and Macrina, were they not altered too? It was not that Emmelia was paler and thinner, and that—

"There appeared and spread faint streaks of gray o'er her forehead,

Dawn of another life that broke o'er her earthly existence,
As in the eastern sky the first faint streaks of the morning;"

or that Macrina's beautiful face wore a deeper shade of womanly thoughtfulness. They were elevated, etherealised; and holy and pure as he had ever known them, he saw that a great work had been done in their souls during those peaceful years.

Naucratius and Gregory were absent; but he was prepared for that, they were, of course, engaged in their studies. It was some little time before their names were mentioned, and then another surprise, the greatest of all, awaited him. Tears were in the mother's eyes, though the smile upon her lips told that all was joy within, as she related

how Naucratius, their Naucratius, the sunbeam of their quiet house, the darling of all their hearts, had left them for ever ! God hath set His heart upon him, too ; He had whispered the all-powerful “ Follow me,” and Naucratius was gone ! Away from the dear home, and the mother he so loved, and the sweet family life ; away from the world he knew not, though his charms and talents would have made him its idol : out into the dark, dreary woods, and mountain caves, to dwell alone with God. Oh ! what a love must that have been that could conquer so many loves ! So were the mother’s prayers heard for that most cherished son, the first of all that saintly family to dedicate his undivided heart to the service of his Maker. A young slave named Chrysaph, broken-hearted at his departure, had followed him, and discovered the place of his retreat. It was a forest on the banks of the river Iris, in Pontus. Chrysaph would not leave him again, and Naucratius was at last obliged to consent to his sharing his solitary and austere life. The slave from time to time

returned to Emmelia and gave her news of her dear child.

Basil listened in silence as these details were communicated to him with many interruptions, the mother's love breaking out into praises of the absent one, his thoughtfulness, his gaiety, his affection, how they had missed him, how they missed him still ; or revealing the still deeper feelings of her joyful gratitude that he, for whom she had feared most, was safe. And Basil continued silent ; but Macrina, watching him, saw that his heart was full, too full for words. When the hour of parting for the night came, Basil knelt by his mother's chair in the old boyish fashion ; and, as she gave him her blessing and a fond embrace, he whispered : "Oh, mother, you feared for Naucratius, and he is safe ; fear a little for me, too ; and save me,"

In Cæsarea Basil remained. He taught rhetoric, and even for a time pleaded at the bar with remarkable success ; but he seemed indifferent now to the eulogiums passed on his eloquence. Hi

mind was working out a problem. Naucratius had taken quite simply and naturally the step which he meditated, and on which, in his secret soul, he could not but acknowledge he had been building up a structure of dangerous spiritual pride. What was the difference between them? He reflected on the motives which were urging him to forsake the world—the disdainful loathing with which its hollow pretences filled him, the contempt with which he viewed those still entangled in its flimsy meshes, and then he thought of Naucratius, saw the bright face, the soft eyes full of gentle mirth, the tender mouth, remembered his fearless innocence, his willingness to yield to others, his cheerful acceptance of the lowest place. Impossible!—those eyes could never flash with scornful pride, nor that lip curl with contemptuous sneer, and how could he, so unaffectedly humble, he who, besides, had never tasted the fruits of bitter experience, how could he prefer his judgment to that of others who were content to live in the world and professed them-

selves happy in their choice? And if not, how was his determination to be explained?

Macrina's aid was not wanting to Basil at this decisive moment of his life. He had at once opened his mind to her, and she clearly perceived the root of those defects which marred his noble resolve. Gently and patiently she led him to understand that the ascetic life which he contemplated must be founded on the solid rock of God's love and a true vocation from Him, and not on the shifting quicksands of self-esteem and self-love. He thus relates himself the outcome of these several influences:

"After a long time spent in vanity, and almost the whole of my youth vanishing in the idle toil of studying that wisdom which God has made folly, when at length, roused as from a deep sleep, I gazed upon the marvellous light of Gospel truth, and discerned the unprofitableness of the wisdom taught by the perishing authorities of this world, much did I bewail my wretched life and pray that guidance would be vouchsafed to

me for an entrance into the doctrines of godliness. And, above all, was it a care to me to reform my heart, which the long society of the corrupt had perverted. So when I read the Gospel, and perceived thence that the best start towards perfection was to sell my goods and share them with my indigent brethren, and altogether to be reckless of this life, and to rid my soul of all sympathy with things on earth, I earnestly desired to find some brother who had made the same choice, and who might make the passage with me over the brief waves of this life. Many did I find in Alexandria, many in the rest of Egypt, and in Palestine, in Cairo, Syria, and Mesopotamia, whose abstinence and endurance I admired, and whose constancy in prayer I was amazed at; how they overcame sleep in spite of the necessity of nature, bearing ever a high and free spirit in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness; not regarding the body, nor enduring to spend any thought upon it, but living as if in flesh not their own; how they showed, indeed, what it is to be so

formed in this world, what it is to have our conversation in heaven. Admiring and extolling the life of these men, who could so, indeed, carry about with them the dying of the Lord Jesus, I desired that I myself, as far as I could attain, might be an imitator of them.”—Ep. 223.

This expedition to visit the monastic institutions of Syria and Egypt was undertaken in the year 357, when Basil was twenty-eight years old.

And now Emmelia and Macrina began to make preparations for carrying out what had long been the ardent desire of their hearts. Basil, Naukratius and Gregory no longer needed a mother’s and a sister’s care; the younger girls were already affianced; and when their marriages took place, there would be no impediment to the accomplishment of their cherished project—of founding a monastery in which they could both devote themselves for the remainder of their lives to the immediate service of God. Macrina’s little charge—Peter—was no difficulty. This child would seem to have been a ready-made monk from the cradle.

His sister, early discovering his taste for spiritual things, never allowed him to occupy his mind with profane studies. He applied himself exclusively to the Holy Scriptures and theology ; and from the dawn of reason was devoted to prayer and contemplation, while he laboured with the rigid zeal of an ancient ascetic to mortify his awakening passions and to subdue the inclinations of nature.

Emmelia proposed the establishment of two monasteries, one for men the other for women, and her plan was soon carried into execution. Peter was placed in the former, for the purposes of education ; and when Basil returned from his visitation of the solitaries, he undertook the direction of the house, and composed a rule for its members. Both convents were situated on the family estate in Pontus, on the banks of the same river Iris near which Naucratius dwelt.

The church, which was common to all the religious, was built at about a quarter of an hour's walk from both monasteries, and was dedicated to the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, in Armenia. It

was in the same persecution of Licinius, in which Emmelia's father had suffered, that these holy confessors gave up their lives for Christ; so that we can understand the special devotion in which they were held by all this holy family. The Roman Breviary thus relates the history of their martyrdom :—“During the reign of the Emperor Licinius, and under the presidency of Agricolaus, the city of Sebaste, in Armenia, was honoured by being made the scene of the martyrdom of forty soldiers, whose faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and patience in bearing tortures, were so glorious. After having been frequently confined in a horrid dungeon, shackled with chains, and having had their faces beaten with stones, they were condemned to pass a most bitter winter night in the open air, and on a frozen pool, that they might be frozen to death. When there, they united in this prayer: ‘Forty have we entered on the battle; let us, O Lord, receive forty crowns, and suffer not our number to be broken. The number is an honoured one, for Thou didst fast for forty days,

and the divine law was given to the world after the same number of days was observed. Elias, too, sought God by a forty days' fast, and was permitted to see Him.' Thus did they pray.

“ All the guards, except one, were asleep. He overheard their prayer, and saw them encircled with light, and angels coming down from heaven, like messengers sent by a king, who distributed crowns to thirty-nine of the martyrs. Whereupon, he thus said to himself : ‘ There are forty men where is the fortieth crown ? ’ Whilst thus pondering, one of the number lost his courage ; he could bear the cold no longer, and threw himself into a warm bath, which had been put near at hand. His saintly companions were exceedingly grieved at this ; but God would not suffer their prayer to be void. The sentinel, astonished at what he had witnessed, went immediately to awake the guards ; then taking off his garments, he cried out with a loud voice that he was a Christian, and associated himself with the martyrs. No sooner did the Governor's guard perceive that

the sentinel had declared himself to be a Christian than they approached the martyrs, and, with clubs, broke their legs. All died under this torture except Melithon, who was the youngest of the forty. His mother, who was present, seeing that he was still living after his legs were broken, thus encouraged him: ‘My son, be patient yet a while. Lo! Christ is at the door helping thee.’ But as soon as she saw the other bodies being placed on carts, that they might be thrown on the pile, and her son left behind (for the impious men hoped that, if the boy survived, he might be induced to worship the idols), she lifted him up into her arms, and, summing up all her strength, ran after the waggons on which the martyrs’ bodies were being carried. Melithon died in his mother’s arms, and the holy woman threw his body on the pile where the other martyrs were, that, as he had been so united with them in faith and courage, he might be one with them in burial, and go to heaven in their company. As soon as the bodies were burnt, the pagans threw what

remained into a river. The relics miraculously flowed to one and the same place, just as they were when they were taken from the pile. The Christians took them and respectfully buried them.”

These holy relics Emmelia now translated to her new church, and many miracles wrought on the occasion rewarded her piety and augmented the glory of the holy martyrs. She soon after caused the remains of her husband, Basil, to be removed to the same place, and directed that she herself should rest beside him there when the hour of her release came.

The organisation of her own convent next claimed her attention. Although her age, reputation, and position as foundress naturally led all the religious to regard her as their mother, the humble Emmelia would never accept the office of superior. She placed her daughter Macrina at the head of the house, and was the first to render her unqualified and submissive obedience. The community was soon formed. Many holy virgins and widows were found who had long aspired to

the religious state, but who, like Emmelia herself in her early days, had been obliged to relinquish or postpone the accomplishment of their wishes, owing to the disturbed condition of society and the small number of monastic institutions then existing in Cappadocia and Pontus. All Emmelia's maid servants, accustomed to the almost conventional life they had led under her roof, declared their desire to imitate the example of their saintly mistress. Emmelia and Macrina willingly received them, and they were treated on terms of perfect equality with the rest, all property being common in this holy sisterhood, and no distinction being made in food, beds, or clothing. Nothing could exceed the fervour and devotion shown by all. Mortification, retreat, silence, poverty, were their delights, and their time passed happily away in manual work, prayer, spiritual reading, and the chanting of the Divine Office.

It seemed as though nothing was to be wanting to the consolation of Emmelia in her new manner of life. Her beloved Naucratius, rejoicing to see

his mother and sister treading like himself the path of evangelical perfection, now quitted his retreat, and came frequently to visit them, to console and encourage them in their holy enterprise, or, as he himself declared, to gain strength and edification from their example and counsels. Emmelia found him loving and respectful as ever: but what treasures of spiritual wisdom had he not accumulated during the brief period of his seclusion! These pious conversations became her greatest earthly delight, and all the community profited by them from time to time. But Naukratius was one of those whose image was to be ever—

“Associate with all pleasant thoughts and bright
With youth and loveliness.”

Into his few brief years he threw all the vital energy that carries others through a long lifetime. Who knows but those interrupted careers, that seem to us more full of promise than of fruit, do not present a complete and perfect whole in the eyes of God, to whom time is nothing, and the

difference between possibilities and facts infinitesimal?

Not satisfied with the austeries of their solitary life, Naucratius and Chrysaph had, out of charity, taken two poor old bed-ridden men into their hermitage. They waited on these miserable sufferers with the tenderest care, and Naucratius, in order to supply them with food, resolved to turn to account some of the skill he had acquired in boyhood. Armed with his bow and arrows, or his fishing-rod, he made long excursions into the woods, or along the banks of the Iris, and always returned with abundant store of provisions for his guests. But a day came that he did not return, and Chrysaph, filled with anxiety, set out in search of his beloved master.



VIII.

PEACE.

MMELIA sat at work in the midst of her sisters ; hymns of joyous praise were on their lips—for it was the close of the Easter solemnity—when a mournful procession was seen approaching the convent. Macrina's heart foreboded some misfortune, and, anxious to spare her mother any sudden shock, she hastened to the entrance-gate. What a sight awaited her ! Side by side, on a rude bier, hastily improvised, lay Naucratius and Chrysaph. They were quite dead. A strange serenity and peace was on both faces, and the water, dripping from their poor habits, sufficiently indicated the manner of their end. The bodies had been discovered by the monks of the neighbouring monastery, and though nothing certain could be known, it was generally supposed

that Naucratius had lost his footing while fishing, and fallen into the river, and that Chrysaph had perished in the endeavour to rescue his master. Almost broken-hearted herself, Macrina forgot her own grief in the endeavour to break the sad intelligence to her mother. It was a terrible blow. Emmelia lost speech and consciousness ; and when her senses were restored, it was long before Macrina's words of consolation found an echo in her heart. Naucratius ! her Naucratius ! could it indeed be of him that they spoke ? Launched on the ocean of eternity without the Church's prayers and blessings ;—alone, without one of those he loved by his side—so sudden and melancholy an end to that bright existence ! Gradually Macrina strove to set before her the grounds they had for hoping that his death, though sudden, was precious in the sight of God. She spoke of his saintly life, of the fact that he had met his end in the discharge of an act of charity, and led her on to rejoice in his early attainment of that reward to which they all aspired, and in submission to bow beneath the

chastening hand of Him, “All whose ways are merciful, and all whose deeds are love.”

Meantime Basil had returned to Cappadocia, where he was ordained reader by Dianius, the old Bishop of Cæsarea, by whom he had been baptised. This prelate had the weakness to subscribe the heretical formulary of the Council of Rimini, 360 ; and Basil, much afflicted, judged himself thereupon obliged to withdraw from his communion. He joined his mother and Macrina in Pontus, and took up his residence in a hermitage in the neighbourhood, very likely that occupied by poor Naucratius. While residing here he took upon himself, as we have already mentioned, the direction of the monastery founded by Emmelia, and subsequently established several other conventual houses in various parts of Pontus. To these he gave a rule composed by himself, and he continued to direct them even after he became bishop. His life in his new abode was very austere. He divided his time between prayer and manual labour, but occasionally undertook the office of a mis-

sionary, going about the country, instructing the poor in the Christian doctrine, and teaching them the practice of virtue. In every exercise he was wont to imitate as far as possible the examples he had seen in the deserts of Syria and Egypt. He never wore more than one tunic, never used a bath—which was a great mortification in that climate—slept on the ground, and often spent the whole night in prayer, wore a long hair-cloth at night, but not by day, to avoid the praise of men, inured himself to the sharpest cold, which, in the mountains of Pontus is very severe, never allowing himself the solace of any fire save the sun. His only repast was bread and water, on feast-days he added a few herbs, and all this though his health was always so wretched that he himself says : “ When I am called well I am weaker even than persons who are given over by the physicians.”

Shortly after his arrival in Pontus, he wrote thus to Gregory Nazianzen, reminding him of his promise to join him, and giving a glowing description of his abode :—

‘ My brother Gregory writes me word that he has long been wishing to be with me, and adds that you are of the same mind ; however, I could not wait, partly as being hard of belief, considering I have so often been disappointed ; and partly because I find myself pulled all ways with business. I must at once make for Pontus, where, perhaps, God willing, I may make an end of wandering. After renouncing, with trouble, the idle hopes which I once had, or rather the dreams (for it is well said, that hopes are waking dreams), I departed into Pontus in quest of a place to live in. There God has opened to me a spot exactly answering to my taste ; so that I actually see before my eyes what I have often pictured to my mind in idle fancy.

“ There is a lofty mountain covered with thick woods, watered towards the north with cool and transparent streams. A plain lies beneath, enriched by the waters which are ever draining off upon it, and skirted by a spontaneous profusion of trees almost thick enough to be a fence, so as even to

surpass Calypso's Island, which Homer seems to have considered the most beautiful spot on earth. Indeed it is like an island, enclosed as it is on all sides; for deep hollows cut it off in two directions—the river, which has lately fallen down a precipice, runs all along one side, and is impassable as a wall; while the mountain, extending itself behind, and meeting the hollows in a crescent, stops up the path at its roots. There is but one pass, and I am master of it. Behind my abode there is another gorge, rising to a ledge up above, so as to command the extent of the plain and the stream which bounds it, which is not less beautiful to my taste than the Strymon, as seen from Amphipolis. For while the latter flows leisurely, and swells into a lake almost, and is too still to be a river, the former is the most rapid stream I know, and somewhat turbid, too, by reason of the rock which closes on it above, from which shooting down, and eddying in a deep pool, it forms a most pleasant scene for myself or anyone else, and is an inexhaustible resource to the country people,

in the countless fish which its depths contain. What need to tell of the exhalations from the earth, or the breezes from the river? Another might admire the multitude of flowers and singing birds; but leisure I have none for such thoughts. However, the chief praise of the place is, that being happily disposed for produce of every kind, it nurtures what to me is the sweetest produce of all, quietness; indeed, it is not only rid of the bustle of the city, but is even unfrequented by travellers, except a chance hunter. It abounds, indeed, in game, as well as other things; but not, I am glad to say, in bears or wolves, such as you have, but in deer and wild goats, and hares, and the like. Does it not strike you what a foolish mistake I was near making when I was eager to change this spot for your Tiberina, the very pit of the whole earth? Pardon me, then, if I am now set upon it; for, not Alcmæon himself, I suppose, would endure to wander further when he had found the Echinades.” (Ep. 14.)

Allusion is here made to a short residence

which Basil had made at Tiberina, a district near Gregory's home, before his departure for Pontus. Desire to obtain his friend's society had led to his choice, but the place was in every way so unsuitable that he had to give it up.

"Gregory," says Cardinal Newman, "answered the above letter by one which is still extant, in which he satirises, point by point, the picture of the Pontic solitude which Basil had drawn to allure him, perhaps from distaste for it, perhaps in the temper of one who studiously disparages what, if he had admitted the thought, might prove too great a temptation to him. He ends thus: 'This is longer, perhaps, than a letter, but shorter than a comedy. For yourself, it will be good of you to take this castigation well; but if you do not I will give you some more of it.'—Ep. 7. Basil *did* take it well; but this did not save him from the infliction of the concluding threat; for Gregory, after paying him a visit, continues in the same bantering strain in a later epistle:

“‘Since you take my castigation in good part, I

will now give you some more of it; and, to set off with Homer, let us

“Pass on, and sing thy garniture within,”
to wit, the dwelling without roof and without door, the hearth without fire and smoke, walls, however, baked enough, lest the mud should trickle on us, while we suffer Tantalus’ penalty, thirst in the midst of wet;—that sad and hungry banquet, for which you called me from Cappadocia, not as for the frugal fare of the Lotophagi, but as if for Alcinous’ board for one lately shipwrecked and wretched. I have remembrance of the bread and of the broth—so they were named—and shall remember them; how my teeth got stuck in your hunches, and next lifted and heaved themselves as out of paste. You, indeed, will set it out in tragic style yourself, taking a sublime tone from your own sufferings. But for me, unless that true Lady Bountiful, your mother, had rescued me quickly, showing herself in need, like a haven to the tempest-tossed, I had been dead long ago, getting myself little honour, though much pity,

from Pontic hospitality. How shall I omit those ungardenlike gardens, void of pot-herbs? or the Augean store, which we cleared out and spread over them; what time we worked the hillside plough, vine-dresser I, and dainty you, with this neck and hands, which still bear the marks of the toil (O earth and sun, air and virtue! for I will rant a bit), not the Hellespont to yoke, but to level the steep. If you are not annoyed at this description, nor am I; but if you are, much more I at the reality. Yet I pass over the greater part, from tender remembrance of those other many things which I have shared with you.'—Ep. 5.

"This certainly is not a picture of comfort, and curiously contrasts with Basil's romantic view of the same things. But for the following letter, one could fancy that it was too much even for Gregory; but on Basil seeming to be hurt, he wrote thus:—

"'What I wrote before, concerning your Pontic abode, was in jest not in earnest; but now I write very much in earnest. Who shall make me as in

months past, as in the days when I had the luxury of suffering hardship with you ? Since voluntary pain is a higher thing than involuntary comfort who shall restore me to those psalmodies, and vigils, and departures to God through prayer, and that, as it were, immaterial and incorporeal life ? —or to that union of brethren in nature and soul, who are made gods by you, and carried on high ? —or to that rivalry in virtue and sharpening of heart which we consigned to written decrees and canons ?—or to that loving study of divine oracles, and the light we found in them with the guidance of the spirit ?—or to speak of lesser and lower things, to the bodily labours of the day, the wood-drawing and the stone-hewing, the planting and the draining ?—or to that golden plane, more honourable than that of Xerxes, under which, not a jaded king, but a weary monk did sit ?—planted by me, watered by Apollos (that is your honourable self), increased by God, unto my honour ; that there should be preserved with you a memorial of my loving toil, as Aaron's rod that budded (as

Scripture says, and we believe) was kept in the ark. It is very easy to wish all this, not easy to gain it. Do you, however, come to me, and revive my virtue and work with me; and whatever benefit we once gained together, preserve me by your prayers, lest otherwise I fade away by little and little, as a shadow, while the day declines. For you are my breath, more than the air, and so far only I live, as I am in your company, either present, or if absent by your image.'—Ep. 6."

Such was Basil's life till he was called to the priesthood, which led to his leaving his retirement for Cæsarea; by night, prayer; by day, manual labour, theological study, and mercy to the poor.

The vigorous talents of Basil soon put to rights the disorders and variances which had been the scandal of the Church of Cæsarea; and, with the assistance of Gregory, he completely vanquished the Eunomian disputants, from whose subtlety the peace of the Church had principally suffered. What was of more consequence to its permanent welfare, he was successful in obliterating all the

suspicions which his bishop had entertained of him, and at length gained such influence over him that he had really the government of the see in his own hands. This was the more desirable as Eusebius had not been regularly educated for the ministerial office, but had been called by the sudden voice of the people, as sometimes happened, to fill the episcopal chair. At length (A.D. 370) Eusebius died, and Basil, as might be expected, though not without a strong opposition, was elected, at the age of forty, to supply his place. This opposition was excited by the governing powers of the country, who might naturally be supposed to fear a man of Basil's commanding character, and who were joined by some of the bishops of the exarchate, and by an irreligious party in the city itself.



IX.

STRUGGLE AND REST.

“  HE disorders of Christendom, and especially of the East, and still more of Asia Minor, were so great in Basil's day, that a heathen spectator might have foretold the total overthrow of the Church. . . . In Asia Minor the Church was almost without form, ‘and void and empty;’ religious interests were reduced, as it were, to a state of chaos, and Basil seems to have been the principle of truth and order, divinely formed, divinely raised up, for harmonising the discordant elements and bringing them to the unity of faith and love. However, the destined result did not show itself in his day. Valens persecuted in behalf of Arianism till the year before the saint's death; the semi-Arians con-

tinued their schism after it; and, trying to lead them towards the truth, Basil exposed himself to calumnies both on the part of his brethren, as if favouring the prevailing heresy, and of the heretics, as if maintaining an opposite one. There were dissensions, too, existing within the Church, as well as without. I have already spoken of Basil's difference with his predecessor, Eusebius— jealousies or suspicions, of which he was the subject, extended throughout his exarchate. He seems to have had authority, more or less defined, over the whole of the country which the Romans called Pontus, which was more than half of Asia Minor, and comprised in it eleven provinces. Ancyra, Neo-Cæsarea, Tyana, among other principal sees, acknowledged him more or less as their ecclesiastical superior. Now we have records of his being opposed by the bishops of each of these cities. When he passed out of his own district into the neighbouring jurisdiction of Antioch, he found that metropolis distracted by schism; four bishops in the see at once, two

heretical, a third acknowledged by Rome and the Alexandrians, a fourth in communion with himself. When he went on to the south and west, and negotiated with Alexandria and Rome for the settlement of these disorders, he met with nothing but disappointment, though saints were upon the ecclesiastical thrones of either city. Such is the history of his episcopate, for which he exchanged his sweet monastic life."

We are not writing the history of St. Basil, and therefore pass unnoticed many interesting facts connected with his public life, such as his examination by the Prefect Modestus, and the collision into which he was brought with the Emperor Valens. The last event, however, entailed on him another severe trial, of which something must be said. We borrow the account, as usual, from Cardinal Newman's eloquent pages.

"To lessen Basil's power, Valens divided Cappadocia into two parts. This was about two years after Basil's elevation. In consequence a dispute arose between him and Anthimus, Bishop of

Tyana. Anthimus contended that an ecclesiastical division must necessarily follow the civil, and that, in consequence, he himself, holding the chief see in the second Cappadocia, was now the rightful metropolitan of that province. The justice of the case was with Basil, but he was opposed by the party of bishops who were secretly Arianizers, and had already opposed themselves to his election. Accordingly, having might on his side, Anthimus began to alienate the monks from Basil, to appropriate those revenues of the Church of Cæsarea which lay in his province, and to expel or gain over the presbyters, giving as an excuse that respect and offerings ought not to be paid to heterodox persons.

"Gregory at once offered assistance to his friend, hinting to him at the same time that some of those about him had some share of blame in the dispute. It happened, unfortunately, for their friendship that they were respectively connected with distinct parties in the Church. . . . Gregory's offer of assistance to Basil was frankly made, and

seems to have been as frankly accepted. ‘ I will come if you wish me,’ he had said ; ‘ if so be, to advise with you, if the sea wants water or you a counsellor ; at all events, to gain benefit and to act the philosopher, by bearing ill-usage in your company.’—Ep. 47. Accordingly they set out together for a district of Mount Taurus, in the second Cappadocia, where there was an estate or church dedicated to St. Orestes, the property of the See of Cæsarea. On their return with the produce of the farm they were encountered by the retainers of Anthimus, who blocked up the pass and attacked their company. This warfare between Christian bishops was obviously a great scandal to the Church, and Basil adopted a measure which he considered would put an end to it. He increased the number of bishoprics in that district, considering that residents might be able to procure the produce of the estate without disturbance, and, moreover, to quiet and gain over the minds of those who had encouraged Anthimus in his opposition. Sasima was a village in this neighbourhood.

and here he determined to place his friend Gregory, doubtless considering that he could not show him a greater mark of confidence than to commit to him the management of the quarrel, or could confer on him a post, to his own high spirit, more desirable than the place of risk and responsibility.

“Gregory had been unwilling even to be made a priest, but he shrank with fear from the office of a bishop. He had upon him that overpowering sense of the awfulness of the ministerial commission which then commonly prevailed in more serious minds. ‘I feel myself to be unequal to this warfare,’ he had said at his ordination, ‘and therefore have hid my face and shrink away. . . . Before we have subdued with all our might the principle which drags us down, and have cleansed the mind duly, and have surpassed others much in approach to God, I consider it unsafe either to undertake cure of souls, or mediatorship between God and man, for some such thing is a priest.’”—Or. 2.

“With these admirable feelings the weakness of the man mingled itself: at the urgent command of his

father he had submitted to be consecrated ; but the reluctance which he felt to undertake the office was now transferred to his occupying the see to which he had been appointed. There seems something, indeed, conceited in my arbitrating between saints and deciding how far each was right and wrong. But I do not really mean to do so ; I am but re-viewing their external conduct in its historical development. With this explanation, I say, that an ascetic like Gregory ought not to have complained of the country in which his see lay as deficient in beauty and interest, even though he might be allowed to feel the responsibility of a situation which made him a neighbour of Anthimus. Yet such was his infirmity ; and he repelled the accusations of his mind against himself by charging Basil with unkindness in placing him at Sasima. On the other hand, it is possible that Basil, in his eagerness for the settlement of his exarchate, too little consulted the character and taste of Gregory, and, above all, the feelings of duty which bound him to Nazianzus. This is the

account which Gregory gives of the matter in a letter which displays much heat and even resentment against Basil :—

“ ‘ Well, play the man,’ he concludes; ‘ be strong, turn everything to your own glory, as rivers suck up the mountain torrent, thinking little of friendship or intimacy, compared with high aims and piety, and disregarding what the world will think of you for all this, being the property of the Spirit above ; while, on my part, so much shall I gain from this your friendship, not to trust in friends, nor to put anything above God.’ —Ep. 48.

“ In the beginning of the same letter he throws the blame upon Basil’s episcopal throne, which suddenly made him higher than Gregory. Elsewhere he accuses him of ambition and desire of aggrandising himself. Basil, on the other hand, seems to have accused him of indolence, slowness, and want of spirit.

“ Such was the melancholy crisis of an estrangement which had been for some time in preparation. Henceforth no letters, which are preserved, passed

between the two friends ; and but one act of intercourse is discoverable in their history. That exception, indeed, is one of much interest : Basil went to see Gregory at Nazianzus, in A.D. 374, on the death of Gregory's father. But this was only like a sudden gleam, as if to remind us that charity still was burning within them ; and scarcely mitigates the sorrowful catastrophe, from the point of view in which history presents it : Anthimus appointed a rival bishop to the See of Sasima ; and Gregory, refusing to contest the see with him, returned to Nazianzus. Basil laboured by himself. Gregory retained his feeling of Basil's unkindness even after his death ; though he revered and admired him not less or even more than before, and attributed his conduct to a sense of duty. . .

“ These lamentable occurrences took place before two years of Basil’s episcopate had run out, and eight or nine years before his death. He had before and after them many trials, many sorrows ; but this loss of Gregory probably was the greatest of all.”

Leaving Basil in the midst of conflict and toil, doubtless turning his thoughts often with regretful longing towards the dear retreat where so many happy days had sped away, and where his mother and Macrina were enjoying their tranquil repose, let us, more fortunate than he, direct our steps towards Pontus and enter Macrina's monastery.

It is a lovely summer's evening ; the beautiful garden, cultivated by the diligent and skilful hands of the religious, looks its very best ; but there seems to be no one to appreciate its charms. We enter the open portal, but all seems deserted ; the sisterhood are not at their usual avocations. At last we catch the distant strains of sweet chanting, and following the sound, we find ourselves at the entrance of a bare, comfortless room, now filled with kneeling religious. On a poor couch, in the centre of the apartment, lies one of their number, at the point of death. By her side stands the abbot of the neighbouring monastery, who has just administered to her the last rites of

the Church. It is the death bed of a saint; it is the closing scene in the life of our Emmelia. The end has come at last, as it comes to all, no matter how long the waiting. Round about the bed kneel the religious, male and female, whom she had gathered together in God's honour; her head is supported by her beloved daughter, Macrina, and it is her youngest son, Peter afterwards Bishop of Sebaste, who has given her the final consolations of religion. Full of years, of merits, and of labours, she is entering on her rest, she is going to Basil and to God. Joy and confidence are expressed in her looks as she utters her last words of leave-taking and blessing. Her children weep, but their tears are not all sorrow: their joy at her happiness surpasses their grief for their own loss. Even Macrina is full of holy gladness. The evening breeze is sending in through the open windows the perfume of the flowers below, and waving the flames of the tall tapers to and fro; the prayers go on and Emmelia's voice is heard dis-

tinctly joining in ; fainter and fainter it grows, fading into the dim distance ; the sun is going rapidly down ; before he sets heaven has another inmate.—Emmelia's soul is with her God and Basil.

They laid her by her husband's side in her own Church of the Forty Martyrs, and to her tomb came daily some of her own children, and the still more numerous religious family that God had given her. Hither came St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Basil, who had not been privileged to assist at their mother's last moments. They too were consoled by the thought of her happiness, yet nature would have way at first when they saw her vacant place and missed the fond maternal welcome that had ever greeted them in that holy house.

Basil, writing to Eusebius, Bishop of Samosata, thus informs him of the bereavement he had sustained :—

“ I have deserved through my sins to lose my good mother, the only comfort I had in this

wretched life. Do not smile or despise me when I declare to you that even at the mature age to which I have attained, I feel in full force all the misery implied in the word *orphan*. Rather pity me and condole with me, for I scarce know how to support with resignation the loss of a being whose equal in every respect I never saw, and never shall see.” In Basil’s letters frequent allusions are made to Emmelia, sufficiently proving the high esteem in which he held her—for instance, in defending himself against accusations brought against his orthodoxy by Eustathius, Bishop of Sebaste, he writes: “The idea of God which I had from my blessed mother, and her mother, Macrina, that has ever grown within me. I did not change about as reasons unfolded, but perfected the rudiments of faith by them delivered to me. . . . How often have you visited me at my monastery on the Iris, when my most religious brother, Gregory, was with me, following the same rule of life as myself! Did you then hear from me any such thing, or catch any

hint of it, strong or slight? How many days did we pass together as friends in the village opposite with my mother, and discussed subjects night and day, in which we found each other sympathise?"—Ep. 223.

Emmelia appears to have died about the year
A.D. 370.



X.

LAST SCENES.

ERE we might end, but we think that those who have followed Emmelia's life to its close will like to have in brief the substance of the future careers of her children. Basil was first to follow her. Prematurely aged with labours and trials, he passed to his reward on the 1st January, 379, being fifty-one years of age. His last words were, "Lord, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The entire city of Cæsarea, we are told, had assembled round his house on hearing of his danger, striving, if it were possible, to retain him even by force amongst them. Tears and prayers for his recovery went up with such fervour that it seemed as though

they could not be refused, but God had compassion on His faithful servant, and would not any longer delay the crown he had so well deserved Out of his rich patrimony he left not behind him as much as would defray the expenses of his burial, but his sorrowing people, as Alban Butler expresses it, not only erected an everlasting monument to him in their hearts, but also honoured him with magnificent funeral obsequies. Saints bore the precious remains, and the people thronged around, seeking to touch his shroud, or the bier on which he lay. Sighs and lamentations drowned the singing of the Psalms—Pagans and Jews lamenting with the Christians the death of their common father, the great doctor of the world. St. Gregory Nazianzen delivered his funeral panegyric. Much that has been related concerning his parents and his early life is taken from that discourse. “Such were the virtues of the man,” says St. Gregory, “such the fulness of his celebrity, that others, in order to gain reputation, copied many even of his peculiarities, nay, his

bodily imperfections: I mean, for instance, his palleness, his beard, the character of his gait, his deliberateness in speaking, as being generally deep in thought, and intent on his subject; which things most of them copying ill, and indeed not understanding, turned into gloom; moreover, the quality of his garment, and the shape of his bed, and his mode of eating, nothing of which in him was studied, but natural and spontaneous. And you may fall in with many Basils, as far as outside goes, figures in shadow—it is too much to say echoes; for echo, at least, repeats the last syllables even more clearly; but these are much farther off from Basil as they desire to be near him. Moreover, it is no longer a common, but the greatest of honours, and with reason, to have ever happened to have been in his company, or to have shown attention to him, or to carry with one the memory of anything said or done by him, playfully or in earnest, since the by-doings of this man are more precious and illustrious than what others do with labour."

—Orat. 43.

“Reference is made in these last words,” says Cardinal Newman, “to Basil’s playfulness. This quality his letters abundantly vindicate to him, though it is of a pensive nature. Lest the reader should go away with a more austere notion of him than truth warrants, I will add the following passage from St. Gregory :—

“‘Who made himself more amiable than he to the well-conducted? or more severe when men were in sin? whose very smile was many times praise, whose silence a reproof, punishing the evil in a man’s own conscience. If he was not full of talk, nor a jester, nor a holder forth, nor generally acceptable from being all things to all men, and showing good-nature; what then? Is not this to his praise, not his blame, among sensible men? Yet, if we ask for this, who so pleasant as he in social intercourse, as I know, who have had so much experience of him? Who could tell a story with more wit? who could jest so playfully? who could give a hint more delicately, so as neither to be over strong in his rebuke, nor remiss through his gentleness?’—Orat. 43.

“Sensitive, anxious, and affectionate as Basil appears in his letters, he had a reserve and sedateness of manner which his contemporaries sometimes attributed to pride, sometimes to timidity. Gregory notices the former charge, and exclaims:—

“‘Is it possible for a man to embrace lepers, abasing himself so far, and yet to be supercilious towards those who are in health? to waste his flesh with mortifications, yet be swollen in soul with empty elation? . . . But I suppose it was the self-possession of his character, and composure, and polish, which they named pride.’—Orat. 43.

“The opposite charge to which his reserve gave rise was that of timidity. It is remarkable that he himself, writing to a friend, playfully notices ‘the want of spirit’ and ‘the sluggishness’ of the Cappadocians, and attributes these qualities to himself (Ep. 48). Accordingly, after his death, the heretic Eunomius accuses the opponent of Valens and Modestus of being ‘a coward and craven, and skulking from the heavier labours,’

speaking contemptuously of his ‘retired cottage, and his closely-fastened door, and his fluttered manner on persons entering, and his voice, and look, and expression of countenance, and the other symptoms of fear’ (Greg. Nyss., App., p. 46). This malicious account may be just so far founded on truth as to make it worth while noticing a curious difference in a little matter which it brings out between Basil and the great Ambrose of Milan, who was a man of the world ; while the former is here represented as fastening his door, it was the peculiarity of Ambrose never to shut himself into his house, but to be accessible at all times. Philostorgius, the Arian historian, in like manner, speaks of Basil as ‘superior to many in the power of discussion, but from timidity of mind withdrawing from public disputations.’ And Gregory makes several remarks on his friend which serve to illustrate the shyness or refinement of mind complained of by these writers. He thus concludes his discourse : ‘This, O Basil, to thee from me ; this offering to thee from a tongue once

most dear to thee, thy fellow in honour and in age. If it approaches to be worthy of thee, the praise is thine ; for, relying upon thee, I have set about this oration concerning thee. But if it be beneath and much beside my hope, what is to be expected from one worn down with years, sickness, and regret for thee ? However, the best we can is acceptable to God. But, oh, that thou, divine and sacred heart, mayest watch over me from above, and that sting of my flesh, which God has given me for my discipline, either end it by thy intercessions or persuade me to bear it bravely ; and mayest thou direct my whole life towards that which is most convenient ; and, when I depart hence, then mayest thou receive me into thy tabernacles.' "—Orat. 43.

We have lost sight for a considerable time of Gregory, St. Basil's next brother ; but he also, like the rest of this holy family, was treading the path of sanctity. For some time, indeed, his passionate love for eloquence threatened to lead him astray, or at least to engage him in a worldly

career. However, after he had gained much repute as a teacher of rhetoric, his namesake, St. Gregory Nazianzen, persuaded him to give up that “ ignoble glory ” and to consecrate himself to God in the priestly state. His brother Basil selected him to assist him in his pastoral duties, and, in 372, he was named Bishop of Nyssa, a city of Cappadocia. During the Arian troubles he was banished ; but the Emperor Gratian restored him to his see in 378. His first desire, on his return, was to visit Pontus, in order to see again his sister Macrina and his brother, Peter ; but urgent duties, including attendance at the Council of Antioch, detained him until the close of the year 379, nearly twelve months after Basil’s death.

Macrina’s health had been long declining. Even during her mother’s lifetime she had been a great sufferer. The fearful disease of cancer had at one time threatened her ; doctors and remedies were of no avail. She herself never complained, worked away as cheerfully and actively as ever, and applied to prayer with the same fervour ; but

Emmelia could not endure to behold her sufferings. Day and night she implored of God that this chalice might pass away from her; and at last, filled with boundless confidence in Him who has promised to do to us according to the measure of our faith, she made the sign of the cross over her sick daughter, and, by its virtue, the disease was arrested and Macrina restored to health. But now it was God's will that her earthly pilgrimage should close. Since the death of Basil she had lived still more entirely in heart and desire in that heavenly country whither he, her beloved father and mother, and her dear Naucratius had preceded her. She treated her body more rigorously than ever, considering it as the prison of her soul, which thirsted so ardently for eternal liberty. Prayer was her chief comfort; and the visits of her youngest brother, Peter, still superior of the neighbouring monastery, were a great solace to her. But she felt her end was near, and desired earnestly to see Gregory once again before she died. Her wish was gratified.

Gregory at last arrived ; the monks of Peter's Monastery went out to meet him, with the customary solemnity, and preceded him in procession to Macrina's convent. The nuns were awaiting him in the church, and when they had received his blessing they all withdrew in silence. Then Gregory knew that their superioress was no longer able to be amongst them. He asked to be taken to her, and found her in her poor cell, stretched on a board, her pillow a block of wood, and her only covering a penitential garment. He remained all day with her, and they spoke together of the death of Basil, Gregory with deep affliction, but Macrina with the joy of speedy reunion. So beautiful were her words on the will of God, on the tender love hidden beneath the apparent severity of His trials, on the priceless value and exalted destiny of the soul, and on the joys of heaven, that Gregory reproduced them in a treatise, which he called "The Soul and the Resurrection."

When evening came, and "the prayer of the

lamps," as vespers were then called, was about to be sung, Macrina sent her brother to the church and spent the night in prayer alone. When he came again, early the next morning, a great change had taken place in her appearance, and he saw at once that she was dying. Her voice was no longer audible, save in broken murmurs of prayer. Making a great effort at the very last she signed her heart and mouth with the cross, and so gave up her pure soul into the hands of God.

So strictly was poverty observed in the community that no garment or mantle could be found in the convent suitable to cover the holy remains. Vestiana, who had governed the house during Macrina's illness, said that she had nothing but her poor religious habit. On this Gregory threw his episcopal mantle over the lifeless body, and took in exchange an iron ring, containing a relic of the true cross, which Macrina had ever worn on her heart. Then, assisted by the Bishop of Ibora, he gave her solemn burial. Monks and nuns,

bearing tapers in their hands, and chanting psalms in alternate choirs, walked in procession after the holy body, which Gregory and the Bishop of Ibora themselves helped to carry to the Church of the Forty Martyrs. The concourse of people was so great that although the church was within twenty minutes' walk, it was not reached till evening. The family grave was opened, and with the usual prayers and ceremonies Gregory laid Macrina's remains next to those of her beloved mother Emmelia. Then he knelt down by the grave, and reverently kissed its earth. It was he himself that afterwards wrote the life of his saintly sister.

Peter was consecrated Bishop of Sebaste in 380. While presiding over his monastery he had given proofs of great charity during the time of famine in Pontus and Cappadocia, and after his consecration laboured with signal success against the Arian heresy. All the writers of the time bear witness to his extraordinary sanctity, prudence, and zeal. In solid eloquence he was declared

inferior to none but his incomparable brother Basil and St. Gregory Nazianzen. He assisted at the General Council of Constantinople, which condemned Macedonius, 381. His death occurred in 387, and his memory began immediately to be honoured at Sebaste.

St. Gregory of Nyssa was the last of this holy family to enter into his rest. He died about the year 400. He had long been regarded as the centre of the Catholic communion in the East, those bishops only who were joined with him being considered orthodox. His high reputation for learning and virtue procured for him the title of Father of the Fathers. His works are very numerous.



XI.

GREGORY ALONE.

BUT was there not another Gregory who may claim to be considered one of the household? Our sketch would be incomplete without some reference to his after life; there was an episode in it which we should scarcely have expected from his antecedents.

“Gregory,” says Cardinal Newman, “disliked the routine intercourse of society; he disliked ecclesiastical business, he disliked publicity, he disliked strife, he felt his own manifold imperfections, he feared to disgrace his profession and to lose his hope; he loved the independence of solitude, the tranquillity of private life; leisure for meditation, reflection, self-government, study, and literature. He admired, yet he playfully satirised

Basil's lofty thoughts and heroic efforts. Yet, upon Basil's death, Basil's spirit, as it were, came upon him ; and within four months of it he had become a preacher of the Catholic faith in a heretical metropolis, had formed a congregation, had set apart a place for orthodox worship, and had been stoned by the populace. Was it Gregory, or was it Basil, that blew the trumpet in Constantinople, and waged a successful war in the very seat of the enemy, in despite of all his fluctuations of mind, misgivings, fastidiousness, disgust with self, and love of quiet ? Such was the power of the great Basil, triumphing in his death, though failing throughout his life. Within four or five years of his departure to his reward all the objects were either realised or in the way to be realised, which he had so vainly attempted, and so sadly waited for. His eyes had failed in longing ; they waited for the morning, and death closed them ere it came. He died on the first of January, 379 ; on the 19th of the same month the glorious Emperor Theodosius was invested with the imperial purple ;

by the 20th of April, Gregory had formed a Church at Constantinople; in February, in the following year, Theodosius declared for the creed of Nicæa; in November he restored the churches of Constantinople to the Catholics. In the next May he convoked, in that city, the second General Council, which issued in the pacification of the Eastern Church, in the overthrow of the great heresy which troubled it, and (in a measure and in prospect) in its union with the West. “*Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum ejus!*”

We need not here enter into a detail of the circumstances which led to Gregory's being placed in the See of Constantinople. A summary of his doings and fortunes there shall be given in Cardinal Newman's words :

“A place of worship was prepared for him by the kindness of a relative. There he began to preach the true doctrine : first, amid the contempt, then amid the rage and violence, of the Arian population. His congregation increased ; he was stoned by the multitude, and brought before the

civil authorities on the charge of creating a riot. At length, however, on Theodosius visiting the capital, he was recognised by him as bishop, and established in the temporalities of the See. However, upon the continued opposition of the people, and the vexatious combinations against him of his brother bishops, he resigned his see during the session of the second General Council, and retired to Asia Minor."

Gregory's farewell address to his congregation is still extant, and is justly considered a model of eloquence and charity. "Farewell," he says, "our Anastasia, name once so promising and due to our pious confidence; farewell, pontifical throne, coveted and perilous honour; farewell, harmony of the psalms, holy vigils, looks of the poor, turned towards God and to me; farewell, hospitable dwellings, friends of Christ and strength of my weakness; farewell, you who loved my discourses; eager throng in which I saw the rapid pencils that stole away my words; farewell, rails of the sacred enclosure, which so often yielded to

the throngs who pressed forward to hear my voice. Farewell, O princes of the earth, palaces of kings, servants and courtiers, faithful, it may be, to your master, but certainly, for the most part, unfaithful to your God. Applaud your new orator, raise him to the skies ! The voice which displeased you shall now soon be hushed. Farewell, sovereign city, friend of Christ (for I bear this testimony of it, though its zeal be not always according to science, but the moment of separation softens my words) ; come to the truth, amend at least now, though it be but late. Farewell, guardian angels of this church, who watched over my presence here, who will still protect my exile. And Thou, Holy Trinity, my constant thought and my glory, may they keep Thy faith, and do Thou save them all—save my people !”

So great had been St. Gregory's reputation as a preacher during his sojourn in Constantinople, that the great St. Jerome journeyed hither only to hear him. He, one day, asked St. Gregory the explanation of an obscure passage in the Gospel ;

St. Gregory answered, smiling: "I will tell you to-night in the church, where everybody applauds me. You must needs seem, at least, to understand me there; for, if you alone do not applaud, you will be taken for a barbarian." This sufficiently proves St. Gregory's estimate of popular applause, "which," adds St. Jerome, "shows ever most admiration for what it least understands."

St. Gregory's declining years were spent in retirement near Arianzum. We are told he had a garden, a fountain, and a shady grove, in which he took much delight. The only thing he regretted was the absence of his friends. He gave spiritual advice to all who resorted to him, and spent his time in prayer, mortification, and watching. He wrote many poems, with the object of opposing those made use of by heretics to propagate their errors. His death occurred in 389. For his character we again quote Cardinal Newman:—

"When, turning from his ecclesiastical life, we view Gregory in his personal character, we have before us the picture of a man of warm affections,

amiable disposition, and innocent life. As a son, full of piety, tenderness, and watchful solicitude; as a friend and companion, lively, cheerful, and open-hearted; overflowing with natural feelings, and easy in the expression of them; simple, good, humble, primitive. His aspirations were high, as became a saint, his life ascetic in the extreme, and his conscience still more sensitive of sin and infirmity. At the same time he was subject to alternations of feeling; was deficient all along in strength of mind and self-control; and was harassed, even in his old age by irritability, fear, and other passions, which one might think that even years, not to say self-discipline, would have brought into subjection. Such mere temptations and infirmities in no way interfere with his being a saint, and, since they do not, it is consolatory to our weak hearts and feeble wills to find from the precedent of Gregory, that, being what we are, we nevertheless may be in God's favour."

Of the extracts which Cardinal Newman gives from Gregory's writings to illustrate the conspicu-

ous points in his character, we can reproduce but two here. They form something like the examen of conscience of the great ascetic :—

MORNING.

“ I rise, and yield my claspèd hands to Thee,
 Henceforth the darkness hath no part in me,
 Thy sacrifice this day ;
 Abiding firm, and with a freeman’s might,
 Stemming the waves of passion in the fight,
 Ah ! should I from Thee stray,
 My hoary head, thy table where I bow
 Will be my shame, which are mine honour now.
 Thus I set out—Lord, lead me on my way !

EVENING.

O Holiest Truth, how have I lied to Thee !
 I vowed this day thy festival should be ;
 Yet I am dim ere night.
 Surely I made my prayer and I did deem,
 That I could keep in me thy morning beam,
 Immaculate and bright.
 But my foot slipped, and as I lay, he came,
 My gloomy foe, and robbed me of heaven’s flame.
 Help Thou my darkness, Lord, till I am light.”

In concluding our extracts from Cardinal Newman's sketches of these great saints, I cannot resist quoting his lines on

THE GREEK FATHERS.

" Let heathens sing thy heathen praise ,
 Fall'n Greece ! the thought of holier days,
 In my sad heart abides ;
 For sons of thine in Truth's first hour
 Were tongues and weapons of His power,
 Born of the Spirit's fiery shower
 Our fathers and our guides.
 All thine is Clement's varied page
 And Dionysius, ruler sage
 In days of doubt and pain ;
 And Origen with eagle eye ;
 And saintly Basil's purpose high
 To smite imperial heresy
 And cleanse the altar stain.
 From thee the glorious preacher came
 With soul of zeal and lips of flame,
 A court's stern martyr guest ;
 And thine, O inexhaustive race !
 Was Nazianzen's heaven-taught grace ; .
 And royal-hearted Athanase
 With Paul's own mantle blest.

In Patria! For nearly fifteen hundred years of our time this holy family has been gathered together in Our Father's many-mansioned home. The ties God knits are for eternity; can we doubt that in heaven those bonds of relationship and friendship which lend a sweetness even to exile will exist in all and more than all their original force? Yes, there the family circle will be reformed; though all the blessed will be united together in the sweetest and most familiar intimacy, though the new friendships we shall make there, will be one of our eternal joys, still we believe that parents and children, brothers and sisters will in a very special manner rejoice in one another's happiness and share one another's glory. "In Eternity even the past is recovered," or rather there is no past then; the soul has entered into a participation of God's vision, and the events of Time are fixed in one unchanging Present. According to our way of speaking, the saints in heaven may indeed be said to have a Future still—Time still exists, the world's knell has not yet sounded, and God may

allow them only to view “all earth scenes *as they pass.*” Indeed we love to imagine them watching with keen interest and even guiding in strange, wondrous ways themselves, the course of events enacted on this insignificant little planet to which they are bound by another of God’s indissoluble bonds. But the Past, as past has no existence in eternity—it is there distinct, vivid, present for ever in that one ever beginning, never ending moment.

Basil and Emmelia and their children have been living in that moment now these fifteen hundred years, and in their souls still is the first thrill of rapturous joy with which they heard that “*Veni!*”—which we also hope to hear, please God, one day. Meantime on earth they have not been forgotten. Every hour, every moment of the days that made up these fifteen hundred years, the air around our tiny globe has been populous with souls. Like the soft mists from the sea they have been ascending from the valleys and the mountains, the cities and the oceans of earth, to swell

the chorus around the Throne. How many of them have left behind that luminous track which we call fame, immortality?—name them, number them, the thing is possible, and thus prove to yourself that far the largest proportion of those who dwell in the memories of men are precisely those who voluntarily surrendered all earthly hopes for the possession of eternal treasures. No; they are not forgotten, nor can they—the canonised Saints above all—forget the Church Militant here below, she will not allow them. Year after year with loving fidelity she recalls their memories in her martyrology and keeps their festivals, she feeds her sheep with the wholesome doctrine they have left her, and day and night all over the world the lips of her priests and religious send up to Heaven the echo of their words enshrined in the Divine Office.

She commemorates, on the 14th January, St. Macrina the Elder, SS. Basil and Emmelia together on the 30th May, and the younger Macrina on the 19th July. The festival of St.

Basil the Great is kept on the 14th June ; that of St. Gregory of Nyssa on the 9th March, and that of St. Peter of Sebaste on the 9th January. I cannot omit here either St. Gregory Nazianzen whose feast occurs on the 9th May.

From heaven they are looking down on us—they so secure, we still in danger,—they are preparing brighter days for their poor native country ; they are noting all who turn towards them still with affection and veneration ; they are so truly humble, because so truly great that they will accept even this little offering from a loving heart. O dear Saints ! pray for us, and bring us all safe one day to the home where we shall know you, and love you, and thank you aright !





